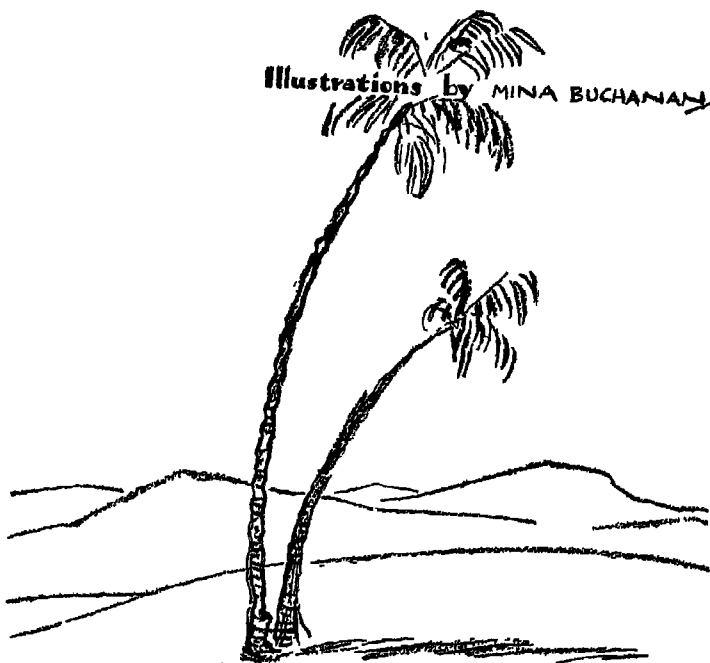


INDIA IN FABLE, VERSE AND STORY BY L. H. NIBLETT

Illustrations by MINA BUCHANAN



THACKER & CO. LTD., BOMBAY

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY N. B. LESLIE, MANAGER,
THACKER & CO., LTD., 8, OAK LANE & 115, ESPLANADE ROAD,
FORT, BOMBAY.



THE AUTHOR

(In the foreground is one of the man-eating panthers he has shot)

FOREWORD.

MUCH has been written about India and much more will be written. The country is vast and varying enough to hold perpetual interest, moving the observers to record their impressions and experiences. But somehow there is an elusive quality in the trait of the land which has baffled capture. Concepts of life are variegated; the highest philosophy and the crudest ignorance co-exist; faith is often overborne by superstition and the colour of existence stifled by astounding self-abnegation. It is a rich theme for study which Capt. Niblett, with his facile touch, has undertaken to advantage. He flits through a long vista of time and space, crowding into his reminiscences and historical narrative a wealth of information which only the favoured few who have had an intimate knowledge of the country, its people and its culture can record. Instinctively the author has gone to the core of things; he has not concerned himself with outward show, but has rather devoted himself to an interpretation of the real India.

Even those who are not strangers to the land will be startled into wonderment on a perusal of these vignettes—this “mosaic” which reproduces a multiform life—weird, bizarre or elevating. The subjects are treated deftly in prose and in verse, with the sympathy of friendship.

Capt. Niblett empictures for us a gorgeous, though vagarious and almost lunatic autocracy, the foibles and lewdness of an Oriental ruler, and the intrigues of his Court; the horrid divergencies of caste and the iniquities they connote; the exalting ideals of the Hindu and the noble significance behind the festivals he

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celebrates; the precious faith of the Mussulman; the romance of an Indian wedding; and not the least grateful, the sublime loyalty that made light of peril during the holocaust of the mutiny. A few demons and spirits are thrown in for savour; and tears, smiles and amazement are alternately evoked.

Thus the most essential aspects are skilfully presented and they will bewilder the casual traveller who can only acquaint himself with the outer fringe unrecognisably transformed in modern days. Reflectively these studies also throw a flood of light on the actual problems confronting the non-vocal masses. In design, this book is not political in character. But it helps to show that the political issue is not much more than an excrescence and that the work for the reformer and the ardent champion of the national well-being lies in courageously tackling deeper and more abiding topics. That effect is incidental; perhaps especially compelling for that reason. The lasting value of the book, however, is that within its pages are imprisoned for our benefit if not actually the enduring spirit of the ages, at any rate, its myriad manifestations.

D. T. W.



DEDICATED

TO

The *Revd.* *Father Amedeus, O.M.C.*

A GREAT PRIEST,

A REVERED FRIEND

AND

A LOVING GUIDE.

PREFACE.

THE success which attended my little book "Flashlights of India" has encouraged me to launch a more ambitious endeavour. This publication revises and so considerably enlarges that edition, that I have fallen to the temptation of altering the original title.

My object however, remains the same. Firstly, I desire to place on record something of old-time India at a stage of the country's progress when the past is slipping by with enormous rapidity; secondly, to enlighten people generally, and the Englishman specially, on certain phases of Indian life and customs which they largely fail to understand and, therefore, to appreciate.

It is obvious that many writers before me, with far abler pens, have touched on these subjects; but I feel I must pay my own humble tribute to a country which my family has served for three generations before me, which I have known from my earliest childhood and which has been very kind to me throughout.

For my sentiments, I make no apology: for any shortcomings, in other respects, however, I must take shelter behind a very crowded life, teeming with multifarious duties, official and otherwise, which have allowed me only spasmodic intervals to devote to this work.

L. H. N.

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IN MOGUL HAREM, TENT AND COURT.

Introductory.

A HUNDRED years have rolled by since there sat, in royal state upon the throne of Oudh—Nasir-ud-din Haider, "Roof of the World," "Asylum and Refuge of the Universe." The "Oudh" over which that autocratic monarch ruled was not merely, the shrivelled, circumscribed subdivision of a province which it is to-day, but it extended to the north to the borders of Nepal and Eastwards and Westwards and Southwards far beyond the limits of the present United Provinces. But it is not for the magnificence and brilliancy of his Court that we remember this King: it is for his idiosyncracies, his vagaries, his puerilities, his extraordinary fondness for European attire and English people.

For light upon his private life, we have so far depended largely on William Knighton, and his interpretation of tales told by that historical *ayah*, Elihu Jan. It would, therefore, come as something of a surprise for those who do not know, that to-day, in the heart of the Farrukhabad District, in an old-fashioned town named Shamshabad—now hardly more than a big village—there is preserved the poison-proof crockery used by this monarch, a gorgeous coat inlaid with gold, worn by His Majesty at his coronation, a wonderfully embroidered silk coat—a production of the finest handwork of the Chinese—and reserved by the King to be worn by him when he visited his *harem*, and many other relics.

How did these things get there, we ask in surprise. Why at Shamshabad? Because it is there that the descendants of the one-time Prime Minister of the King, Nawab Fazl-i-Ali Khan, now live.

They preserve to this day a diary kept for him by the son-in-law of this much-respected ancestor, and from this diary, which is partly in Persian and partly in high-flown Urdu, I have managed to glean a few incidents in the life of the King which come to us with the hall-mark of truth in that they represent a daily entry of facts, as time went on, by one who would naturally have had the best opportunity of knowing the details of the King's private life better than anyone else—except perhaps his foot-presser who was an especial favourite and during massagist operations was in a position to know even more of the monarch's private life!

Let no one be surprised that the highest official of the State, whose functions should have been limited to official knowledge alone and whose connection with the King should have been a purely formal one, should have known the minutiae of his private life. In India it was different, and, indeed, to-day it is different.

The private life of high officials of the land is watched closely to the present day, and very few details are hidden from his subordinates, however much the official himself is unaware of the secret promulgation that goes on. Hardly an official visitor calls who does not first humbly pay his respects to the orderly outside the door, handover his quota of bucksheesh and then receive a brief oral biography of the official's recent life which the orderly has observed himself and supplemented by the stringing together of news conveyed to him severally and jointly by the household establishment.

I may be permitted here to mention *en passant*, a little conversation which took place in the Court of a Joint Magistrate while I was awaiting his arrival in court.

Enter, an orderly peon bearing a *basta* (a bundle of official files tied in an immensely filthy cloth); an exchange of mutual greetings; then :—

Court Reader.—“What is the Sahib’s *mizaj* (disposition) like this morning ? ”

Orderly Peon.—“ Oh ! fairly good.”

C. R.—“But on what ground do you think so ? ”

O. P.—“Well, the *Khitmatgar* told me he ate fairly well at breakfast. He gave the bearer a slap very early in the morning for not cleaning his gun, but he seemed to cool down later.”

C. R.—“You say he ate fairly well, but what did he eat ? ”

O. P.—“*Dalliya* and milk, fish, toast, eggs and bacon.”

C. R.—“But that’s no indication. How many eggs did he eat ? ”

O. P.—“I saw the bearer take two eggs in; but I don’t know how many he brought out again. It was silly of me, but I forgot to take note of it.”

C. R.—“But, my brother, that doesn’t show anything. The point is, how many eggs does he have normally ? ”

O. P.—“Normally he has two and when he is annoyed, he often has none at all.”

C. R.—“Now, tell me one thing more, did he have the eggs fried or——”

The Joint Magistrate's footsteps were suddenly heard and the orderly peon was found busily and assiduously dusting the table: the Court Reader, with puckered brow, reading an Urdu Ordersheet. Presumably, the conversation was continued after the Court rose for the day, but every detail must have been, asked and mental notes made.

So, to return to the diary kept for the one-time Prime Minister of King Nasir-ud-din Haider, that diary's record of the King's private and public life rests upon a substantial basis.



A Riverside Incident.

ONE OF the most amusing stories in the diary is that which relates to the King's favourite foot-presser. The name of this masseur was Husaini alias Chichinda. The diary shows on what intimate terms Husaini was with the King, to the chagrin of the other more illustrious members of the Court. While Husaini indulged in his massagist operations he also indulged in scandalising various members of the Court and the King's ears were poisoned by these vindictive and virulent tales, so greatly resented by all and sundry.

Now it came to the Prime Minister's ears that Husaini was even scandalising him to the King and he felt that the danger must be removed. So, one day, he had Husaini arrested and after castigating him roundly, he ordered that Husaini should be sent, in secret, to some remote corner of the Kingdom from where he would be unable to continue his nefarious tactics.

Husaini was duly sent, under a strong guard, to Cawnpore. Next morning, the Prime Minister approached the King with sombre face and said, "O, Roof of the World, Light of Lights, woe is me! Poor Husaini got cholera last night and though all that could be done for him was done, he expired this morning. His corpse lies there and may be shown to Your Majesty, but there is great fear of infection and should Your Majesty catch that dread disease, the rivers of your realm would swell with the tears of the people of your kingdom."

The King was greatly distressed, but could not summon up the courage to call for the corpse, so he merely contented himself by retiring to his room, disconsolate and sad, ordering that his beloved Husaini be given a splendid funeral.

The days passed by and the watch over Husaini's movements at Cawnpore became slacker. At last, one day, Husaini slipped away unnoticed and wandered back to the King's capital. Afraid

of approaching the palace gates, should he be recognised and handed over to the Prime Minister, he remembered that it was the practice of the King to go out on boating expeditions in the morning during the course of which he took his daily bath. So Husaini meandered down the course of the slow-moving river and at last, he caught sight of the King in the Royal skiff, the silver panels of which were dazzling in the morning sun.

The King was all alone. Slowly, Husaini approached the Royal personage. Suddenly, the King's eyes fell on Husaini, and he was astonished at the apparition that stood before him.

"Husaini!" he cried "Husaini, can it be you who stand before me or is it a wraith? I thought you were dead long ago."

Husaini rushed up to his old master and immediately, poured out all his troubles and told, in detail, of his banishment and the annoyance of the Prime Minister. The King was enraged beyond measure. Shaking with temper, he invited Husaini into the boat and paddled it quickly towards the palace, fuming and muttering as he went.

A spy saw Husaini sitting in the King's boat which was swiftly moving up towards the palace. As swiftly, this spy sped to the Prime Minister and informed him of what he had seen and heard.



The Prime Minister, trembling at the thought of his fate, quickly struck upon a plan of action, and before the King could arrive, he had issued his instructions accordingly to all the household staff.

The King, followed by Husaini, now came up the steps leading to the palace, his eyes tinged with red rage, his whole frame shaking with emotion. Unable to contain himself, as he reached the palace gates, he turned on the sentry, who was standing there, and pointing to Husaini, said "Do you recognise this man? Is he not Husaini?" The sentry, true to the instructions given him by the Prime Minister, looked straight towards Husaini with blank and vacant stare and said "O, Roof of the World! O, Shadow of God! O, King of Kings! you can see all things above and below heaven, but I am a mere man, dust of dust, with only earthly sight to help me. I can see nothing."

The King called him a fool, turned away and ran through the palace gates, into the throne room where, still in bathing costume, he took his seat, with Husaini by his side. He sent for the Prime Minister to appear before him immediately. Scarcely had his command gone forth when the Prime Minister appeared and bowed low, in humble homage, before the mighty autocrat in whose hands lay his life.

The King looked at him and with a cruel curl of his lips demanded, "Do you know this man? Is it not Husaini?" The Prime Minister was unmoved: he looked vacantly in Husaini's direction and, nerving himself up to act the part he must play, and play well, to save his life, said with lamentation in his voice, "O, Eternal Light, have I not begged you not to go out on your bathing excursions alone? Have I not warned you that some day an evil spirit will cast its web around you? Here, you have been caught in the trammels of the ghost of the dead Husaini.

You point in that direction and ask me to see Husaini and all I can see is thin air. Your Majesty, I beg you to flee from this vision that you are seeing. Compose yourself, do not allow these accursed spirits to lay hold of you."

As the Prime Minister continued to speak in slow-measured and deliberate accents, the King's attitude changed; his face fell; then he seemed to be caught up in a tornado of fear and, unable to turn his eyes again towards Husaini, lest the spirit should again cast its spell over him, he turned and fled into his *harem* for refuge.

Immediately, the Prime Minister took hold of Husaini and had him marched off to his own palace. There, he decided to take his life, but later relenting, he offered him one more chance for his life and deported him to Cawnpore, warning him that should he return at any time, no mercy would be shown to him. With a view to keeping him contented there, the Prime Minister conferred upon him a small pension and the descendants of Husaini to-day are still in Cawnpore, still dependent to a greater, or lesser extent on the magnanimity of the Nawabs of Shamshabad the descendants of the Nawab Fazl-i-Ali Khan, one-time Prime Minister of His Majesty King Nasir-ud-din Haider.

The Harem.

KING Nasir-ud-din Haider could not resist a pretty face. He was, like most of the kings of those days, a much married man. Though he wore his heart on his sleeve, yet he was of a violently jealous nature. He did not even like the idea of any of his wives getting too fond of each other, and always tried to keep them apart. He was in the habit of crawling about his *harem* at nights on all fours, to see if he could catch any of his many Ranis lying together. On two occasions, he discovered this, and the Ranis concerned were immediately put to death.

The diary, under review, mentions a number of these Ranis of whom I might pick out six of the chief of them, and refer to what the diary has to say about them.

His first love was Barkat Khanam, who had the title of Afzal Mahal. This girl was secured for the King by his step-mother for a considerable sum of money. She was presented to King Nasir-ud-din Haider while he was still a prince. She gave birth to Faraidoon Bakhat alias Munna Jan, who was afterwards disowned by King Nasir-ud-din Haider as not being his own legitimate son. Fortunately, Afzal Mahal died young, otherwise she would probably have suffered for the suspicions raised in the King's heart, at a later period of his life, as regards the legitimacy of this son's birth.

His next wife was Hussaini Khanam to whom he gave the title of Malka Zamaniya. She was originally the wife of a Pathan of Benares, and worked as a maid-servant, but later, married a *mahaut* (elephant driver) in Lucknow. The star of her fortune was, however, in the ascendant and suddenly, the need arose for a wet-nurse for the infant Munna Jan, the son of Afzal Mahal, so this wife of a *mahaut* was given the post. She was of exquisite beauty, and no sooner did the King see her, he fell passionately

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in love and married her, conferring on her the title of Malka Zamaniya and presenting her with a Jagir and cash to the extent of ten lacs of rupees. Her brothers were appointed managers of her Jagir, and she was suddenly uplifted to royal state, being given a retinue of a hundred elephants with gold and silver *howdas* and scores of maid-servants who, in turn, were given bullock-carts with silver trappings and palanquins of Eastern richness.

How short-lived was this sudden rise to eminence however. Only a few weeks afterwards, one Hakim Mehdi, one of the many advisers of the King, whispered to him that it was folly to bestow so much upon a woman of low birth. The King's 'love' vanished and the once all-powerful Malka Zamaniya was laid aside. Like a meteor in the Eastern sky, she had sped rapidly on with ever-increasing brilliancy and then suddenly that ball of fire was extinguished and lost to sight.

Then followed the Anglo-Indian wife, who was given the name of Vilaiti Mahal. The diary says that there was one Mr. Walters, an English tradesman, who had two daughters. Their complexion, of course, was lighter than that of the pure Indian. The diary states that one of these girls one day sent her photograph to the King and he was so captivated by it that he sent for her and married her, giving her fifty thousand rupees in cash along with ornaments worth lacs of rupees; but jealous eyes were cast on her, and suddenly, one day, an extremely cunning person, an ordinary minstrel by profession, came forward and claimed that he was the father of this girl and not Mr. Walters! With this claim he promptly took possession of Vilaiti Mahal's estate in pargana Mianganj. Without any enquiry, the King accepted the claim and laid Vilaiti Mahal aside as an impostor of illegitimate birth. No one dared ask the King either to reconsider his decision.

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Next followed the daughter of a singer, Husaini, with whom the King was so much in love that he married her and called her Khurshed Mahal. One day, whilst fondling her, he took off his crown and put it on her head and thenceforward called her Taj Mahal. The diary says that a very respectable European lady of that time stated that she had never seen a more beautiful girl, either in Europe or in India, than Taj Mahal.

Not very long after, during the course of one of the usual revelries by night, the King was struck with the beauty of one of the dancing girls who danced before him with sinuous movements. Next day, he married her and gave her the title of Badshah Mahal.



The King had just disclaimed Munna Jan as his son and he was filled with the desire to have an heir to the throne. He had invited *Faqirs* and *Jogis* (religious mendicants) to pray to God to grant him a son. Badshah Mahal seized upon this opportunity and, not very long after, declared to the King that there was every prospect of her bearing him a son in the near future. But her rivals soon betrayed her and proved to the King that if any son was born, it would not be his,, but somebody else's ! Badshah Mahal was duly laid aside.

The next wife was Bismillah Begum, to whom the King gave the title of Qudsiya Mahal. Of all the flimsy fascinations which the King ever had, this particular one seemed stronger than the rest. Qudsiya Mahal came from a Turkish family and was previously married. One day, she quarrelled with her husband and went to the palace to seek employment.

She was of surpassing beauty and the King was unable to resist her charms. On hearing her story, he compelled her husband to divorce her, and married her himself. Apart from her beauty, she was most generous-hearted, even perhaps to the extent of extravagance. The diary shows that one day she asked the King to show her his collection of Kashmir shawls. Instantly, her request was granted and in a few minutes there lay on the floor before her a collection of shawls of the most exquisite beauty—the best that Kashmir could produce—the estimated value of which was 70 lacs of rupees. After going through this treasury of expensive fabrics, Qudsiya Mahal promptly gifted the whole collection to her maid-servants!

The King was too taken aback, or perhaps, too embarrassed to protest. It is said that Qudsiya Mahal spent 3 crores of rupees in three years. She, too, like Badshah Mahal, desired to present the King with his heart's desire—a son. At last, she struck upon a plan. She secretly sent for her former husband, and he was smuggled into the palace, locked up in a box. There, he was dressed in the garb of a woman and kept in hiding.

The King went into raptures when he heard he was to have a child by Qudsiya Mahal and he hoped that it would be a son. But the child, a boy, was still-born. The King was distracted with disappointment, and attributed this misfortune to a maid-servant, named Nooran having cast a wicked spell on Qudsiya

Mahal. The maid-servant was promptly put to death. Someone, however, conveyed it to the King that this boy was not his own.

The King was furious. He rushed into his *harem* and laying hold of Qudsiya Mahal, challenged her chastity. Qudsiya Mahal calmly replied that if he suspected her chastity, she was prepared to lay down her life at his feet as she had promised to do when she married him.

The King laughed cruelly at this and retorted, "so said many others before you, but it's easier said than done." Like a flash, Quadsiya Mahal whipped out a dagger from her waist and plunged it deep into her heart. There, at the King's feet, she breathed her last This was on August 21st, 1834.

Let us now draw a veil over the *harem* and its tragedies

The Court.

WE HAVE seen how the Ranis in the harem fared—to-day at the zenith of their glory ; to-morrow, laid aside and forgotten. But it was not only in the *harem* that we observe these meteoric ascents and descents in the Royal favour. In the Court, the same régime prevailed.

The diary, under review, mentions the case of one Ram Dayal. He was the son of one Beni Ram,, a barber by caste and a betel-nut seller by profession, who had two wives—one a Hindu and the other a public woman by the name of Ashooran. Ram Dayal was born of the Hindu wife.

Ashooran had a daughter by Beni Ram. This daughter grew to be an extremely captivating girl and Ram Dayal (her half-brother), hoping to make a good thing out of it, presented her to King Nasir-ud-din Haider. The King was so pleased with her that he married her and conferred the title of *Phul Mahal* on her.

But this was not all. Ram Dayal had to be rewarded. The title of 'Raja' was conferred upon him and he was made Madar-ul-Moham or Chief of the Household Staff—a position from which a maximum income could be extracted with the minimum effort—that effort being merely the preparation of a bill for household expenses. Whether all the items in that bill were strictly correct was, of course, of minor importance, but the time of presentation of the bill was all-important. To receive immediate sanction, it was necessary to place it before the King for scrutiny at a time when his vision, as well as his understanding, was blurred by drink. At such a time, the King signed a payment order for a couple of lacs of rupees with as much exultation as he would crack a vulgar joke.

In the Court, the gamble for power always prevailed. Any vulgar comedian who had sufficiently attracted the attention of the King could meddle with State matters. It was a Court mimic, Fazal-i-Ali, by name, who, at a time when the King was guffawing uproariously at an obscene joke, suggested a successor to the Prime Minister and promptly his proposal was accepted. Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan, the nominee of the minstrel, was duly appointed Prime Minister! Nevertheless, Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan was a very able man and, besides reorganising the law and police departments, he set the State finances on stable ground. He increased the State revenues and cut down expenditure to a minimum.

The 'axe' was applied even to the King's personal requirements; cloth which was bought for the King's pyjamas was usually valued at Rs. 50 per length, but the new Prime Minister bought it at Rs. 15 a length. Handkerchiefs usually purchased at Rs. 3 each were now bought at Re. 1 each. The King was in the habit of discarding any article of clothing he had used once. Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan ordered that these articles should be washed and worn at least three times before being discarded. On one occasion, the King ordered 500 gold bracelets to be distributed amongst the maid-servants of the *harem*. The Prime Minister secretly had the bracelets made of silver and washed over with gold. But this was his downfall. The King resented thrift and was greatly displeased with the Prime Minister's niggardliness. Finally, it took a card-sharper, Taj-ud-din Husain Khan, to recommend and obtain his dismissal.

It was during the Premiership of Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan that there was another dramatic example of a rise to power and a sudden fall from the zenith of favour. It happened thus.

While the King was holding Court one day, a lunatic burst into the chamber with a loaded gun on his shoulder and a naked sword in his hand. He sprang at the King and a servant, Mamman Khan, who was standing nearby, grasped the lunatic by the back of the neck and overpowered him.

The King was in a cold sweat with the suddenness of this onslaught and, with a heart overflowing with gratitude and admiration, he immediately appointed Mamman Khan a courtier of the front rank of favourites. Mamman Khan, being of low estate, did not bear his elevation with the grace he should have, and, taking advantage of the Royal favour, continued with greater nonchalance to indulge in all the city brawls and bazar-riots in which he could possibly partake.

The Prime Minister complained against him to the King, but no serious notice was taken. This increased the presumption of Mamman Khan and he then attempted to undermine the influence of the Prime Minister.

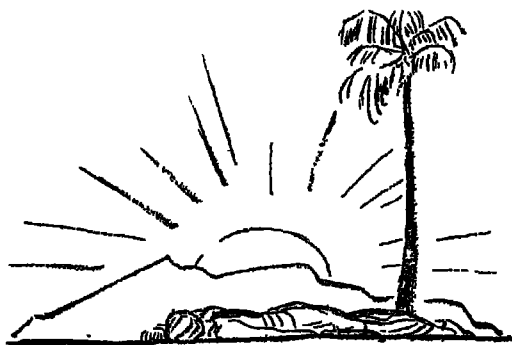
One day, in open Court, he spoke in the foulest language of Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan. The King overheard it and taking it to be as contemptuous of his presence as it was insulting to the Prime Minister, he ordered the arrest of Mamman Khan. With kaleidoscopic rapidity, Mamman Khan fell. His days were numbered.

But he was not to escape with a normal death. The King delegated his power to the Prime Minister to decide the form of death. The lust for revenge ran riot in Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan's breast and, like a flash, he made his pronouncement. "Let him be hanged by his legs, head downwards," said Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan in measured accents, while the Court was silenced in expectation. "And", continued Hakim Mehdi Ali Khan, "let the

heaviest pair of pincers available in the Kingdom be clamped upon his wicked, lying tongue till it is drawn out of his hideous head."

The King paused a moment, and the whole Court listened with bated breath, to hear whether the King would accord his Royal sanction to this form of torture and death for a one-time favourite and a saviour of the Royal personage. It was a pause of only a moment and the King, in a voice which could hardly be heard even in the deathlike silence which prevailed, said hoarsely, "Let it be done" and hastened from the throne-room into his *harem*.

Before the day was done, Mamman Khan had paid the terrible penalty and was dead.



The King's Joke.

IT WAS an early summer morning when King Nasir-ud-din Haider was walking in the cool of his garden. He stood for a while before the fountain and watched the morning sun bursting through the spray in vari-coloured tints. Through that veil of rainbow colours he saw a shadow flit past from one evergreen shrub to another.

What could it be? A man, a murderer, a spy on his *harem*? All these questioning thoughts must have flashed through his mind now surcharged with dark suspicions.

"Come here, *badmash* (villain)" he called, "come forth at once and explain how you lurk here." The figure emerged quiveringly from behind the shrub. He was ragged and poorly-dressed, with dishevelled hair and beard. Hardly had he approached within 20 paces of the King, when he prostrated himself on the ground muttering, "O! Roof of the World, Protector of the Poor, Worshipful Presence—mercy."

"What brings you here, blackguard?" demanded the King.

"My brother is in your service, Your Majesty," cried the prostrate man. "He is Razzak, groom, and I came here to look for him and ask him to help me to get employment in Your Majesty's stables. I am a stranger here and lost my way, never dreaming that I would insult Your Majesty's eyes with the vision of so miserable a sight as myself."

The King realised that the man was perfectly honest, but always fond of a joke, dissembled anger and increased suspicion. "Villain!" he cried, "You lie! Murder is written in your face, and I take your presence to mean treason. You shall be put to death."



At that moment, one of his servants, with consternation in his eye, approached the King. "Bring me my pen and a scroll of paper. I shall write this man's death warrant." "Mercy! Mercy!" cried the man, in broken accents of agony and apprehension. Immediately, the pen and paper were at hand. The King proceeded to write while his victim continued to writhe and cry in the acuteness of his suffering. "Give this man a post on Rs. 5 a month," he wrote and rolling up the paper, with a grim smile, he handed it to his servant.

"Give this," he said to the servant, "to the Royal guard and order them to send this man immediately, under escort, to the Prime Minister who will carry out my orders at once."

The prostrate man, still pleading for mercy, was immediately conveyed from the scene, and hardly had he gone, when the King was convulsed with laughter.

The Prime Minister at that time was Nawab Mir Fazl-i-Ali Khan (whose son-in-law's diary we are perusing). He was unable to reconcile the pitiful cries of the supposedly condemned man with the terms of the order he had received. So he wrote a note on the scroll explaining the circumstances to the King and asking if there was some mistake about it.

The King, on receipt of the enquiry, merely passed a line through the Prime Minister's remarks and added a dot after the figure "5" in his order, which made it read in the vernacular, "Rs. 50."

The Prime Minister was still more confused on receipt of this and thinking that someone was befooling him, wrote back again by a special and trusted messenger of his own, asking the King whether these were his orders. Again, the King passed a line through his remarks and added another dot to his order. "Give this man a post on Rs. 500 a month" was what the order now read !

Dumb-founded, Nawab Mir Fazal-i-Ali Khan hastened to the Palace himself and explained to the King that if there was no mistake and the order was meant to be carried out to the letter, the Royal coffers were so empty that this would be increasing the strain upon it for the sake of an employee who would be worthless in any capacity.

"Nawab Sahib", replied the King, "You are right. There is a mistake. Give me the *parwana* (order)." Taking the scroll, he chuckled to himself and added yet another dot after the previous figure making it read "Rs. 5,000 a month." "The mistake is now rectified" he said. The Prime Minister bowed in obeisance and was departing, when the King added, "Now, convey my order to the man and send him to me."

The Prime Minister obeyed the Royal command and soon the ragged man stood before him, as in a dream, unable to understand what would be the end of these developments, unable to realise what the real object of the King was. "Release him", said the King to the guard, and the shackles which bound him were removed. Then, turning to the released prisoner, the King said, "Your thanks are due to the *Vazir* (Prime Minister) for your promotion from Rs. 5 to Rs. 5,000 a month. Go now, and when the Court opens to-day, you will be created a Nawab."

The surprised man salaamed deeply and was on the point of backing away from the Royal presence, when suddenly the King turned and spoke again. "But wait; you cannot go like that !

It would be a disgrace to the position you now hold," He then sent a servant to have the man bathed and groomed and ordered that some of his own clothes should be put on him.

In half-an-hour, the stranger was present before His Majesty, apparelled in garments of the richest brocade. "Now," said the King, "you may go." And then, again, he checked the stranger. "But wait; you cannot walk in the streets like that ! It would be a disgrace to the position you hold." Immediately, he ordered that a troop of Cavalry should be given him as a guard of honour, a retinue of 30 servants for personal attendance and 20 elephants, gaily caparisoned, to convey the new dignitary and his staff to the Palace vacated by the previous Prime Minister and now assigned to this new power in the land.

And so, the gorgeous procession proceeded on its triumphal march. An hour later, it retraced its footsteps to the Court, where, in Royal State a new Nawab was created and a new star scintillated—for a while—on the Mogul horizon.

But it was only for a while, and the mighty power fell. Along with it fell also Nawab Mir Fazl-i-Ali Khan who was grossly insulted in open court by having his turban knocked off his head at the instigation of the King.

Shakespeare might have been peering into these scenes of fallen glory when he wrote those memorable lines :—

" And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. "

So it was in the time of King Nasir-ud-din Haider—in that shadow-land where men and women had such frail and delicate hold of position and power, and existence itself.

The Camp.

ON ONE occasion, the King was proceeding to the jungles of his kingdom for shikar. A gorgeous procession was formed and the King was mounted on the leading elephant which was heavily caparisoned with gold, and carried two huge silver bells on either side which tolled with every step the leviathan animal took. Above him, there dazzled, in the bright sunlight, a richly-brocaded red umbrella. A troop of brilliantly-uniformed cavalry, with brightly-coloured pennants flowing from their glistening lances, led the procession. Behind the King's elephant, there followed a great host of richly-draped elephants and palanquins bearing the King's staff and dancing girls.

The streets were packed, and great crowds gathered to see the Royal monarch pass on his way from the palace.

Suddenly, the King's eyes fell on a man making faces at him. He stopped his elephant and ordered the man to come forward. All eyes were set on the man as he came, and those who had seen the offence committed, thought that nothing could avert an order for the man to be put to death instantly.

The man realised his own danger, and immediately commenced to dissemble lunacy. Turning to the Prime Minister, who was on the elephant next following, His Majesty, the King said "Let



this man be taken to the Master of Ceremonies and placed first on the programme of entertainment for to-night. He will make facial contortions for an hour in my presence and if he is not sufficiently funny, he will be put to death." The order was obeyed and the man was taken, in chains, to the camp.

That night, this man, with the shadow of death before his face, had to indulge in varied forms of grimace to tickle the fancy of the King and thus escape the awful fate that awaited failure. He succeeded, and was thereupon, appointed permanently to entertain His Majesty.

The King had been two days in camp when the Prime Minister, Raushan-ud-daula, happened to mention that the shikar had cost 15 lacs of rupees and that now, the Royal coffers were empty. What seemed to have happened was that the personal exchequer of the King which he had inherited from his forefathers had been drained dry by the King's extravagance. The State balance had been spent by Raushan-ud-daula and could not, therefore, be used to replenish the former.

The King was furious and, fuming with rage, he ordered that the camp should return at once and that it should reach Lucknow by noon the following day. It was then midnight, and Lucknow was 40 miles away. A palanquin was ordered for the King and within ten minutes, the procession started back; the brilliant lights of the Royal tent were extinguished; the whole scene was one of activity as tent after tent dropped with heavy thud and was folded up and packed away.

Before the darkness was out, the grove which had presented so resplendent an appearance but a few hours before, was deserted. Dawn broke to see a plain littered with straw and broken pitchers, with no signs of life anywhere. Such were the whims of King Nasir-ud-din Haider.

The King brooded about this incident and his temper grew exceedingly bad. His capriciousness was more marked than ever. He began to drink even more heavily than before. One night, while the revelry of the Court was in full swing, he got annoyed with the dancing girls who were doing their utmost to please him and to vie with each other.

For a time, the King had enjoyed their boisterousness and had even encouraged them to go on. With minds ablaze with drink and hearts excited with jealousy of each other should one be favoured more by the Royal pleasure, these seven girls danced on, becoming more turbulent with every step.

The music was at its height. Suddenly, the King frowned ominously. The next moment, he raised his hand in signal for the revelry to stop.

The music was silenced, the dancing and buffeting ceased. "Is this your respect for my Court and my presence?" he thundered. "Are you here for my pleasure or to tear yourselves to pieces like wild-cats? If it is the latter, you want, you shall have it." Saying this, he ordered the seven dancing girls to be locked up in a room measuring 10ft. x 10ft. with no ventilation, the door to be chained from outside.

It was a terrible June night. The girls, hot from their violent exercise, ablaze with the fire of liquor burning within them, were forcibly incarcerated, in this tiny room with no inlet for air. At first, wild shrieks emanated from within; then low cries for water, then moaning, then silence.

Next morning, the seven corpses found in the room were buried in the same grave outside the Palace gates. They were mere girls of ages ranging from 14 to 17 years; but what of that? There were many others like them in the Royal Court of King Nasir-ud-din Haider.

The King's Bravest Act.

THERE WAS no indulgence in which the King entered more heartily than that of watching elephant fights. He would sit on the balcony of his palace at Musa Bagh and look over the silent waters of the Gomti, on to the giant arena across the river which was prepared for the purpose. The people gathered in their thousands to witness these mammoth contests.

One day, a terrible tragedy occurred. After a vicious fight, in which two enormous brutes engaged, the victorious elephant, maddened with rage, stinging with pain from his lacerated wounds, excited by the bedlam created by the massed voices of thousands of spectators, filled with the fire of victory, ran amok. Like the players of a victorious team throw up their hats in delight and exultation, the triumphant elephant picked up men and women from the packed sides of the arena and flung them sky-high, trampling them to death as they fell. Others, he caught and tore limb from limb. It was some time before the crowd could recede in their frantic flight.

Not satisfied with this individual damage, the elephant now commenced to tear up booths which crashed to the ground with a hundred terror-stricken spectators upon it. Then, from across the river, the King's bodyguard, seeing the awful wreckage, raised a cry of horror. The elephant heard it and, breaking through the arena, with trunk upraised, made for the water's edge. In a minute, he was swimming furiously and fast across the river, in the direction of Musa Bagh.

The King noticed this, and ordered his lancers to prepare to meet it with a charge. Soon, the elephant had gained the opposite bank and with a hollow blood-curdling shriek, made for the palace. The lancers charged, riding knee to knee, in solid

phalanx, their pennants fluttering in the air. The elephant veered and received only a few glancing spear-wounds from the flank of the charging troop. He then, turned back towards the river-bank and attacked those who were fleeing hither and thither to save themselves.

It was then, the King showed remarkable courage. He hastened down the steps and in spite of all entreaties by his advisers, mounted his snowy-white Arab and unarmed, galloped, at tremendous speed, towards the death-dealing giant. Risaldar Mustafa Khan Kandhari alone, followed him.

Then, a miracle happened. The elephant—whether it had cooled down by this, or whether even with its brute-mind, it realised that it was Majesty itself which approached him or whether it had respect for an unarmed horseman—dropped his trunk from its upraised position and looked meekly at its assailant.

The King drew up within a few feet of it and then walking his horse up to the monstrous beast laid hold of it by the ear. Slowly, he brought it back to the palace gate and made it over to its mahaut. The people were struck dumb with amazement, and it was not till the King was seen again on his balcony, that a roar of applause went up from the thousands who were gathered around.



The End.

DISTRAUGHT AT the death of his favourite queen, Qudsiya Mahal, haunted by the phantom of impending bankruptcy and soured by bad health, the King now became increasingly morose. He took a vow that he would live the life of an ascetic for the rest of his days. He discarded his bed with its voluptuous cushions and silks, and slept on the floor which was covered with velvet mattresses and Persian carpets. To imitate the garb of a dervish, he ordered more shawls from Kashmir, the value of which ran into several lacs of rupees!

One day, the Prime Minister of that time (Raushan-ud-daula) remarked to the King, "Sire, while Your Majesty frets so for the death of the Rani Sahiba (Qudsiya Mahal), your step-mother (Badshah Begum) lives a richer, brighter life each day on the hidden treasures in her palace. She mourns not at all." To add fire to this, a maid-servant, who was standing by, added "Well, a step-mother is after all only a step-mother. Had she been a real mother, she would surely have shared Your Majesty's grief with you."

The King rose from his melancholic stupor and with never a word, proceeded to Badshah Begum's palace. As soon as it came to be known that the King was proceeding there, some mischiefmakers, with a desire to fan the fire, posted two eunuchs, armed to the teeth, at Badshah Begum's house. The King noticed them and took it as a sign of defiance to himself.

He rushed into the palace and demanded that Badshah Begum should leave at once and also surrender Faridoon Bakht to him. The Mogul spirit rose within Badshah Begum's breast and drawing herself up, with a flash of challenge in her eye, she refused to comply with any of the King's demands. "When I was bold enough," she said, "to disregard your father's authority, do you think I will cower before his son whom I have brought up in my arms?"

Afraid of what the Governor-General would do if he interfered with his step-mother, still fuming, the King withdrew; but later he made up his mind to evict Badshah Begum by force.

A few days after, he called up part of his army and ordered General Raja Darshan Singh and General Sheo Dan Singh to take possession of the palace by force. They marched on the residence of Badshah Begum and besieged it. The Begum's personal bodyguard was overpowered, arrested and imprisoned; but the Begum herself, accompanied by her maid-servants, was not prepared to yield without an effort. So they, suddenly, emerged from the palace, armed with brickbats, and showered these with vehement force on those who stood at the gate. Raja Darshan Singh was rather severely wounded and so taken aback were his men, that they retired to the gates. Then, unexpectedly, they were fired upon by some of the Begum's bodyguard who were hidden inside the house. This led Raja Darshan Singh to return fire and as a result, four negresses and many maid-servants of the Begum were killed. At last, the Begum asked for quarter and was allowed to leave the palace in peace and take up her residence in Almas Bagh.

A few days later, the King regretted his action and went to his step-mother to ask pardon of her and to beg her to go back to her palace. Badshah Begum was in tears and besides forgiving the King, asked him to stay the night there as it was too chilly for him to go back to the Palace. Unable to do enough for him, the Begum gave him her own feather quilt to cover that night and asked him to keep it as a gift. The King accepted the quilt.



The next morning, when the King returned to his Palace, he told his Prime Minister, Raushan-ud-daula, what had happened and how glad he was that he and his step-mother were again on good terms. But Prime Ministers in those days dreaded unity in the Royal family because they could always make more out of disunion. Raushan-ud-daula, therefore, dissembling horror, exclaimed "For Heaven's sake, Your Majesty, beware of the impending danger. Your Majesty's step-mother has appointed four negresses with the special purpose of poisoning you. But for the efforts of the eunuch I sent to protect you last night, you would have been a dead man by this."

To a weak mind like that of the King, haunted by suspicion at every turn, influenced by every soothsayer and adviser, this was enough to sway him. The King believed the crafty Raushan-ud-daula and flying into a rage, consigned his step-mother's quilt to the flames.

The Begum was both distressed and alarmed to hear of the fate with which her gift had met and wondered what the King's next move would be. Lest he should attack her again with his Army, she started recruiting a force of her own. In a few days, she had collected nearly nine thousand soldiers around her.

On hearing this, the Resident (of the East India Company) was alarmed, and to avoid further bloodshed, asked the Begum to disband her Army. The Begum, however, replied that she only retained them for self-protection; but the Resident insisted, and even offered that any salaries due to them for the period of their employment would be paid from the Royal Exchequer. The Resident then wrote to the King saying that he had settled the matter and that the King should pay a sum of Rs. 15,000 a month to his step-mother as a maintenance allowance and also two lacs in a lump sum to her Army, which would be disbanded immediately.

The Resident's letter reached the King that evening and he issued directions to the Prime Minister to put up a payment order before him the following morning for his signature, authorising the withdrawal of the money from the State coffers.

Dawn broke: the King lay motionless in his bed : the curtains were drawn: the King was dead. And courtiers in hushed voices, whispered the word 'poison' to each other in the far corners of the death chamber.

Thus, passed King Nasir-ud-din Haider at the early age of 35, almost exactly a century ago.

CAMP SONGS.

Morning.

THE air of the morning towards me is wafting
Its scent with its sweetness and freshness and cheer,
The night with its sighing and sorrow and crying
Is gone, with its harrowing darkness and drear.
The birds they are warbling, the camels are burbling,
The dawn it has tinged with its silver the night,
The dogs they are baying, the horses are neighing,
The fiat of heaven is "Let there be light."
The well it is creaking and thus it is speaking
Of life-giving water that's drawn from its bowl,
The cattle are lowing as slowly they're going
O'er the russet-brown plain with tinkle and toll.
The rustic is singing his song of the morning,
The mist it is lifting its ashen-grey pall
The tents all a-glimmer the dew-drops a-shimmer
The Sun, in its brightness envelopes them all.
Our hearts they are voicing their buoyant rejoicing
For the wak'ning of life at birth of the morn,
Our lips, they are whisp'ring their praise they are lisping
To Him Who with splendour our earth did adorn.



Evening.

THE camp-fires are burning, the night is returning,
The long day of toil and of labour is o'er,
The shadows are stealing across the blue ceiling,
Of the camp and the grove, the plain and the moor.
The night-wind is sighing and singing and crying
Through the trees, its weary sad anthem to Night ;
The stars they are gleaming, the Moon's softly beaming
As onwards she speeds on her nocturnal flight,
The jackals are howling, in packs they are yowling,
A lone hungry wolf breaks the night with his shriek.
These sounds of weird crying are rapidly dying,
Now silence holds sway o'er the camp and the creek.
A voice it is pleading for heavenly leading,
'Tis the voice of a fear-filled and frail human soul
As this Globe keeps spinning, now losing, now winning,
We're slowly but surely approaching Life's goal.
Dear Master of Evening and Lord of the Morning,
Through the night with its doubts, its dangers and fears
We'll lie safely sleeping, secure in Thy keeping
And cast upon Thee all our cares and our tears.

INDIAN FESTIVALS.

The Meaning of Dasehra.

WE HAVE come to think of Dasehra only in terms of holidays, vacations and reduced railway fares; but what is the elemental significance of Dasehra? What is the meaning of this religious observance? We have only to look into the Ramayan to see that Dasehra is at once a sermon and an entrancing story of adventure, self-sacrifice and love.

A million years ago, there reigned over the Kingdom of Uttra Kosul the great Chattri king, Dasarath. His capital was at Ajodhia, a city which reared its head in grandeur over-looking the Sarju River near the present city of Fyzabad. The glories of this kingdom have been sung by Hindu bards and minstrels for centuries past and some of the lore has come down to us of the present day. I heard an ignorant cultivator describe the limits of that kingdom in the following lines :—

“ Purab marey Pur Patan tak,
Pachhim marey Bind pahar,
Dakhin marey garb Kabul tak.
Utter—sath khand Naipal.”

His geography was all wrong of course, but the limitations given suggest a vast kingdom.

Dasarath had three queens. His eldest son was Ram, who was born of the senior queen. His second son was Lachhman, born, of the second queen, and his third and fourth sons, Bharat and Shattrugun, were born of Kaikei, the third queen.

One day, as Dasarath stood before a mirror in the Palace, he observed that his hair was turning grey and he decided that the time had come when he should go into retirement from worldly affairs. He resolved to abdicate in favour of his eldest son, Ram, who was particularly precious to him. All arrangements were made and an auspicious day was fixed for the coronation.

When the news reached Queen Kaikei, however, she was extremely envious because one of her sons should not be given the throne.

Now, Dasarath had promised Queen Kaikei long years before that he would be prepared to grant her any two requests she would make of him at any time. Queen Kaikei had remembered the promise and now felt the time had come to use the privilege to advantage. She reminded King Dasarath of his pledge and demanded that her son, Bharat, should be given the throne and that Ram should be banished to the outermost forests of the kingdom.

Torn between his pledged word on the one side, and his love for Ram on the other, Dasarath was distraught. To a Chattri of those days, however, the breaking of one's word of honour was a most contemptible and unpardonable act. After a tremendous mental struggle, he decided to keep his promise and issued orders in accordance with Queen Kaikei's request. With breaking heart, he told Ram he must go into the forest for a period of 14 years, knowing that he himself could never withstand the separation. Ram obeyed meekly but resolutely, taking leave of his parents. Along with Ram went Sita, his beautiful wife, and Lachhman, his devoted step-brother.

At the time, Bharat was away on the North-West Frontier visiting his mother's ancestral home and all unaware of the arrangements his mother was making for him at Ajodhia.

Dasarath could not survive the consuming sorrow of parting with his beloved Ram and very soon after, pined away and died. The funeral ceremonies had to be performed by one of his sons. Ram and Lachhman were untraceable in the distant forests, so Bharat was sent for. He performed the funeral rites and was then asked by his mother to ascend the throne.

Now, Bharat was an extremely right-thinking young man and when he heard of the manner in which his mother had paved his way to the throne, he was greatly annoyed. Denouncing the action of his mother and deploring the banishment of Ram, he proceeded into the forests to find the exiles and bring them home.

Deeper and deeper into the forest he went in his search till at last, on the hills of Chittra Kot, he caught a glimpse of three wandering figures. He bowed down in obeisance as he approached Ram and begged him to return to Ajodhia. Ram, however, was absolutely firm on the point that he would not disobey his father's orders and not until 14 years was complete would he place foot in Ajodhia.

Unable to persuade him, Bharat took from Ram's foot his sandal and going back to Ajodhia, he placed this on the throne and ruled the State in Ram's behalf, awaiting his return.

Ram now proceeded further and further south till he was somewhere in the vicinity of Rameswaram. One day, he found his wife, Sita, missing. Lachhman and he started a vigorous search, but failed to find her. At last, they met the monkey-god, Hanuman, who helped them to trace Sita's whereabouts. She had been forcibly abducted by Rawan, King of Lanka (Ceylon) and imprisoned because she refused to marry him. On hearing this, Ram collected a great army of South Indian aborigines



called 'Banars', and marched towards Lanka. Before he could reach his objective, he was met by Rawan and a sanguinary battle ensued, Rawan being killed in the fray.

Thus, was Sita restored to Ram, and it is this battle which is commemorated at Ram Lila festivities when towering paper effigies of Rawan are burnt.

That is the story of Dasehra, but what a lesson it has, not only for the Hindu mind but for the world! Do we merely see the victory of Ram over Rawan or do we see through it and behind it, the triumph of virtue over evil, of truth over falsehood, of soulful submission over worldly desire? We see, personified, the obedience of a son, the faithfulness of a wife, the loyalty and self-sacrifice of brothers and the love of a noble father—all wrapped together in one grand conception. Is it any wonder then, that the Hindu mind is stirred by these historical facts and that the Hindu heart is softened with the beauty of the character of these heroes?

It is thus that, at Dasehra time, when the colossal image of Rawan bursts into flames and crashes to the ground two hundred million Hindu voices cry, "*Jai Sita Ram!*" Victory to Sita and Ram! Victory to Honour over Dishonour! Victory to Right over Wrong!

This is Dasehra.

Diwali : The Festival of Light.

DIWALI IS the Festival of Light. It is celebrated on the darkest night following Dasehra, mid-way in time between newmoon and full-moon, and commemorates the return of Ram to ascend the throne of Ajodhia after his 14 years of exile in the forests of his kingdom. His arrival was awaited by a vast concourse of subjects who gathered round the throne waiting in anxious expectation for the advent of their King.

Then, through the brushwood and the forest, emerged the mendicant King, saffron-clothed, bare-footed and bareheaded, with a sheaf of arrows across his back and a gaint bow in his hand, All Ajodhia went mad with transports of joy.

The Capitol and the Kingdom alike, welcomed their King with jubilant acclamation. Ram ascended the throne which had lain vacant for him through that long period of time. Timbrel and cymbal, *dholak* and *sarangi*, vied with each other to fill the air with music worthy of the occasion.

Thus passed the hours of "Raj Gaddi" day, the day of enthronement.

Night came. A thousand flares went up in old Ajodhia. A myriad lights scintillated in the darkening sky and made day of night, while the warrior King sat in Royal State, in the splendour of his simple regalia. There sat a victor over mighty Rawan; a victor over personified Wrong; nay more, a victor over himself. Had he not met temptation and conquered it! Had there not been placed before him, with entrancing imagery, the vision of the throne of Ajodhia should he but decide to mount it, forgetful of his father's command that for 14 years he should remain a wanderer on the face of the earth with the trees of the forest for his canopy and the cold, bare ground for his bed.

There sat Ram, listening to the temple-bells which rang out into the night-air, listening to a chorus of hautboys and conches that bellowed forth their message of welcome, listening to the murmuring refrain of the multitude who had gathered outside the Palace gates and massed themselves together in every street and every public resort within the city walls.

Those glimmering lights that shone out in serried lines, had a dual significance. They constituted the outward sign of jubilation and welcome; but they also operated as a means of driving away the powers of darkness which, in unseen and intangible shapes, hover around scenes of grandeur on the most auspicious occasions. That belief held sway in Ajodhia as it held sway in Ancient Rome. It is that belief which the great Plutarch recorded and which Skakespeare put into the mouth of Horatio, the Danish courtier, with ominous significance, as he stood on his night-watch just before the ghost of Hamlet's father re-appeared

*" In the most high and palmy state of Rome
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets "*

It was these precursors of future--illfortune, these

*" . . . harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on "*

that the people of Ajodhia wished to keep away from their beloved sovereign and King.



In the course of the centuries which have passed, other observances have come to be recognised in connection with Diwali. To some, it is a festival which connotes cleanliness, and the occasion is observed by white-washing, dung-coating and repairing the home. All the collected rubbish is then conveyed to the village dung-hill where it is thrown and, in token that this has been done, a little cruse, with lighted wick, is placed upon the rubbish heap. Then, the home is lighted up. Scores of dips, in little earthen platters, are lit along the walls of the courtyard and the home. Presumably, the significance of this procedure is that as the righteous Ram purged Ajodhia of all its dross, so should the individual, cleanse his home of all the litter and rubbish which has collected during the year.

Another legend has sprung up through the Ages, in connection with Diwali. In the long, long ago there lived a mighty king, the Raja Nal. As he reclined upon his sofa, he called to a courtier and commanded that he should play him in a game of chance. The bashful courtier made excuse that there were no dice to be had.

Raja Nal burst into a passion at so poor a plea and, unsheathing his sword, severed his own thighbone, flinging it to the courtier with the command "No dice in all my kingdom! Take this, and from the bones make me the dice I want." The dice were made and the game was played. Half the kingdom of Raja Nal was the stake.

The courtier won. The shock of defeat, even more than the amputation of his leg, resulted in the death of Raja Nal, whose body was thrown into the river. The bones of that body have made all the shells and cowries which are yielded up by sea and river alike and thus, these substitutes for dice are used to the present day.

Since then, the receptacle for the stakes, the pool, is known in Hindi as the '*nal*' and the subject, like the courtier, gambles on Diwali night to enrich himself and to propitiate the ancient Raja Nal.

Perhaps, it is with the crystalisation of this belief that the festival has come to be associated with Lakhshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. It is in the hope that Lakhshmi will smile upon her devotee and grant him a free ticket to the get-rich-quick state, that gambling is universally indulged in by the Hindu at Diwali time, almost as a religious rite. Thus, also, the festival is sometimes called Dip Malika, the latter word having a possessory significance.

Philologically, the word Diwali is of more than usual interest. The most common interpretation in that the word is Dipvali. Where '*dip*' means exactly the same in Hindi as in English viz., a wick dipped in wax or oil, and '*vali*' is a contortion of '*mala*,' a ring or wreath. Thus, Diwali would mean "Wreath of Light"; but the correspondence of the English and Hindi word '*dip*'. together with the unsatisfactory connection between '*vali*' and '*mala*' almost indicate that the western root "*valere*" in French, suggesting "value", would be more appropriate. Reasoning *a posteriori* from the fact that the Goddess of Wealth is worshipped at this time, we are almost led to the conclusion that this is a more acceptable theory.

Howsoever that may be, what of it? Diwali is the festival of light and of joy, of good cheer and of abandon, of gambling and of wealth, of *lawa* and of *batashas*, of toys of clay and toys of sugar, of feasts and of fairs. India is happier for it. Little else matters.

Muharram : Its Significance and Importance.

MUHARRUM IS that season of the year when all Islam mourns the death of their martyr-saint, Husain and the *taxias*, representing his coffin, are reverently laid to rest. It is then, that the Muharram drums beat out their funeral dirge and many a *majlis* and *naiz* is held.

The *majlis* and *niaz* ceremonies are services at which the praises of Hussain and Muhammad are recited, couplet by couplet. As each couplet is recited, the gathered assembly expresses itself in heartfelt chorus, sometimes of pain and lamentation, sometimes of praise and adoration. As the story of the fateful battle of Karbala is recounted, their hearts fill with fervour. And now, the reciter refers, in the couplet, to the scorching effect of the merciless rays of the sun on Husain who stands, falchion in hand, facing his foes, with blood streaming down his face. Some of the listening audience cry out in agonised expression, others shed silent tears.

The recital finished, a short prayer follows in the form of a benediction. Then, certain stalwarts come forward and beat their chests in a wild staccato, measuring their time with the oft-repeated words, "Hasan, Husain". The same thing is then repeated with iron chains which have triangular spikes at their ends. Each terrible blow of self-inflicted injury causes blood to gush and some of the performers fall with the severity of the strokes.

One wields a sword, and with every repetition of the words "Hasan, Husain," he cuts himself on the forehead, till his whole face is streaming with blood.

So, proceeds the agonising of the Moslem soul over what is to him the most terrible tragedy in history, where a martyr saved

to the world the religion of Islam by accepting the potion of pain and death. To understand the significance of the festival it is necessary to recount the whole sad history of the event.

Many centuries ago, Yazid, the grandson of the leader of the infidels, demanded homage from the saintly Imam Husain. It was refused; Imam Husain, replied that he bowed his head to none but the one God who was the Almighty. Forthwith, Yazid sent out his hordes to subdue Imam Husain, who by then, was proceeding to Kosfa, called by the people of that place to come and ameliorate their condition after the excesses of the tyrant Yazid.

Imam Husain and his followers lost their way in the desert and encamped at the fateful Karbala. There, their path was intercepted by 32,000 men under the leadership of Shimr, a captain appointed by Yazid.

From the 1st to the 9th of the month of Muharram, the Imam begged of the opposing force to desist from violence. He prayed that unnecessary warfare and bloodshed should not be entered upon, but to no avail.

All his reasoning, all his pleadings, all his persuasion fell upon deaf ears, and on the 9th day of Muharram, Imam Husain realised that all was in vain. A desperate struggle must ensue, he must be overwhelmed by superior numbers—in a word, he and his party must suffer massacre, for the fiat of the unbending Yazid had gone forth by then, that nothing but the severed head of Imam Husain would satisfy him. So, Imam Husain prayed for postponement of the inevitable battle till the following day.

His prayer was granted. That night, while all the camp-fires were twinkling around him in that desert camp, he gathered

his followers around him and addressed them in a long and heart-rending speech. He warned them of the coming horrors of the following day, he told them of the sure massacre to ensue, he emphasised that all those who stayed by him were doomed to martyrdom, and then he performed a beautiful act—so full of consideration for human weaknesses, so pregnant of the spirit of sacrifice, so indicative of the kindness of a great heart. He had all the lights of the camp extinguished and as he did so, he told his followers that those of them who had not the courage or the heart to stand the coming martyrdom, might depart unknown and unashamed in the darkness which now befell the camp—

In the morning, as the clusters of purple clouds began to gather on the Eastern sky, there stood 71 faithful followers around the Imam, resigned to the death of martyrs. Imam Husain, armed with a flashing falchion, mounted his pure white charge, Zuljinah. The enemy came out strong and powerful, and the opposing forces—so disproportionate in numbers—clashed in mortal combat.

One by one, the Imam's followers went down fighting, overwhelmed by superior numbers. Hour by hour the sanguinary struggle proceeded.

The Eastern sun rose higher and higher and cast its rays, with relentless force, on to the blood-soaked plain. Imam Husain's party were parched with thirst. His son—still but an infant was thirsting for water and the Imam lifted him into his arms covered him with his mantle and presented the child before the enemy that they may see his pitiful condition and quench his thirst.

Some of the enemy counselled mercys: others resisted it. Dissension spreads.



The commender-in-chief of Tazid's army ordered Hurmullah to cut short the speech of Imam Hussain. Hurmullah complied instantly and drawing his bow, let loose a shaft which buried itself quivering into the throat of the child. The sorely-tried Imam after burying the child, returned into the thick of the fighting with new strength and fresh vigour, slaying all who came within reach of his sword.

The field of battle was filled with dead and dying. His helpers were all killed. Closely pressed on all sides, at last, his faithful charger was felled with a heavy sword-cut. Riderless but undaunted, the Imam carried on the desperate struggle, wielding death-dealing blows on every side, till he was overcome, wounded and killed.

It was then midday, and the scorching sun was high in the heavens as it looked down on the glazed eyes of the martyred warrior, fixed in death. So died Imam Husain, a defender of the Faith.

Worse followed. All his children and remaining family members were either killed or carried off by the victorious enemy.

It is the memory of this glorious history of warrior martyrdom that the festival of Muharram perpetuates. Is it surprising that the faithful follower, the firm believer, is stirred to tears at a

memory so great and grand ? Is it surprising that strong feelings assert themselves, that militant passions are aroused, that a religious fervour plays upon the heart-strings of every true Musalman ? Is it surprising that, when they carry the *tazia* which represents the coffin of the sainted Imam Husain, tears well up in their eyes ?

When the drummer beats with all his fury on the great Muharram drum which reverberates enough to burst itself and fills the earth with echoes of thunder-claps, he sees all these scenes of one-time battle passing before his eyes with kaleidoscopic rapidity. When the sharp rat-tat of the crosssticks is heard, when flashing sabres are wielded round with lightning rapidity, the minds of the performers go back to Karbala, back to the blood-stained desert, back to the hard-pressed Imam, and they are filled with feelings of mingled fury and sadness and religious zeal.

Is it any wonder then, that these people, to whom religion is life and life is religion, with so glorious, so stirring a history to bring to mind, should rent their hair and beat their chests in lamentation and cry out, in their agonised distress, "Oh ! Husain !"

That is all they can do these many centuries after, in respectful memory of their martyred saint. Helpless to help him, but not helpless to honour him, to let their hearts beat in sympathy, they beat their breasts and cry, "O ! Husain," and again, "O ! Husain", and again, a hundred times, "O ! Husain."

This is Muharram !

THE GANGES.

(Written on the occasion of the great
"Kumbh Mela" at Allahabad in 1930.)

GREAT Ganga from Gangotri's giddy height
Bursts into life and rushes down,
With giant might and silvery light,
Down, through gorge and valley, down—
And the silent hills, they watch her go,
Speeding on and on for evermore.

Here cataract, there roaring waterfall,
Leaps down to kiss the foam below,
Enmantled in a gauzy pall
Of spray with multi-coloured glow—
And the stately pines, they watch her go,
Speeding on and on for evermore.

Through the foot-hills, now she winds her course,
In the lower valleys of the "Doon,"
Through the gorges, with increasing force,
Hissing her familiar tune—
And the proud Siwaliks watch her go,
Speeding on and on for evermore.

Now Hurdwar's reached: in front, the plains ;
Great Ganga moves magnificent along :
The temple-bells ring out, and myriad swains
Offer her praise in prayer and song—
The hermit and the martyr watch her go,
Speeding on and on for evermore.



Past Saharanpur, she grandly glides ;
 Then, on to proud Farrukhabad;
 Swelling as the ocean with incoming tides,
 Shedding on the Hindu soul her **Asirbad*—
 And the smiling fields, they see her go,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

Along her banks, rise forts and monuments,
 Vain structures of the human hand !
 And myriad palaces and tenements,
 Here glittering, there crumbling in the sand—
 With reverent eye, they see her steady flow,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

And now, the voice of commerce meets the ear,
 The clatter of a thousand factories,
 Against the sky a host of chimneys rear
 Their heads, with horrid buzz, and wheeze—
 And Cawnpore's trade and merchants see her go,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

Onward, then a hundred miles she rolls,
 As if impatient now to greet
 Fair Allahabad, where countless Hindu souls
 Await her where the rivers meet—
 The colleges and temples see her go,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

Asirbad = Blessing.



'Tis here the Jumna, like a damsel fair,
 Enswaythed in robes of deepest blue,
 Moves slowly on and adds her share
 To her sister stream of sombre hue—
 The millions at the *Sangam* see her go,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

'Tis here the Saraswati hides,
 Like bashful maid behind the veil,
 To meet, with subterranean tides,
 Her mother river grey and pale—
 With triune sanctity, we see her go
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

Roll on, thou emblem of divinity,
 And give thy peace to those who wait
 On thee with faith and certainty,
 And find in thee a heavenly gate—
 Roll on, with sacred and eternal flow,
 Speeding on and on for evermore.

'The *Sangam*—The place of confluence of the three rivers,
 considered the most sacred and purifying
 spot by Hindu bathers.

OLD FAITHFULS.

Parauti and the Indian Banshee.

A True Story of India Half-a-Century Ago.

“**G**HOSTS Nonsense! I am not superstitious” Nor am I, and I have said this myself more than once. But here is a story which had material results of unmistakable significance. It is not an experience of my own, but it is one for which I can vouch because it was told me by one whose veracity I could trust more than that of anyone else in the world—my father. He was a man with an excellent sense of humour and a better power of telling a good yarn; but when he had finished, he always made it clear if the story he told had no basis in fact. This was a tale, however, which he related to me in all seriousness and the truth of which he absolutely vouchsafed.

It is many years now, but I can remember clearly that summer evening when the old man, with his grey head and serious countenance, told me the story, in slow deliberate tones. As near as I can remember, this is what he said:—

“It was in 1886 that I was transferred from Rae Bareilly to Sultanpore. To-day, we have trains which clatter over these parts and would convey you that distance within the course of a few hours. But in those days, the journey was a formidable one, and had to be performed by slow-moving stage-coaches with many perils along the way. I, of course, had my own horses and my dog-cart, so I was independent of the ordinary stage-coach.

My arrangements complete—a horse at every stage—I commenced my journey. Something delayed me at the start, but as it was a crisp winter day, I did not mind commencing my journey shortly after midday. I remember it was my beautiful mare "Stella," who started me on my journey.

At the next stage, 8 miles away, I changed horses and now, I was being taken along at a slow jog-trot by old Obediah whose days of work were really numbered. And then, as the next stage, I harnessed fiery Shaitan who was my favourite riding-pony and who strongly resented being made a cart-horse. But once started, he sped along like the wind, finishing his 8 mile trip in 40 minutes by my watch. He finished so fresh, neighing to his relief along the roadside, that I almost regretted I had not doubled his distance.

It was now about 4 o'clock and I had my afternoon tea here in camp-fashion while the horses were being changed. The new animal was a sturdy *bhutia* pony I had named "Barney." He stepped out well, but his little stride did not exactly furnish speed for it was after 5 o'clock that I reached my next stage. The sun was already looking like a great redolent globe of light on the horizon. Before me lay miles and miles of long white road now looking grey in the evening light. There were two more stages to go and only one of the two horses along the way had any pretensions to speed.

I was now driving poor old 'Juno' who was really getting past work and whom I was retaining more as a pet than as a working proposition. I tried to urge the old lady on; but it was no good. She kept to her steady, measured pace, mile on mile. The road was bordered on both sides with an interminable row of trees—old banian trees, hoary *pipals* majestic *nims* and towering mango trees—which threw ever longer and darker shadows along the road.

To-day, the marauding Thags of India are a memory of the past; in those days, they were a very real menace on the Indian road. Many poor wayfarers, through those wild jungle expanses, suffered at their hands and were left dead upon the highway with no witness but the silent trees and the lonely road to see and to preserve their secret in the hollow chambers of their muteness.

It was not exactly fear : it was a lively apprehension which laid hold of me as I drove on and on in my high-seated district cart with its great iron-bound wheels rumbling and ever rumbling till my ears tingled with that sonorous buzzing refrain punctuated by the constant tap-tap-tap of the ironclad hooves of Juno's steady pace.

Suddenly, an owl would shriek out into the silent night with ear-piercing cry and then another, as if to soothe, would deliver its mournful, deep-voiced hoot with lulling hollowness. And then, silence again, save for the rumble of my wheels and the steady staccato of Juno's hoofs.

"Sahib," said a deep voice behind me, "if you will stop a minute I'll light the candles of the carriage-lamps." It was my old syce, Parauti, who was my only human companion on the journey. I reined up. What silence !

The noise of my wheels on the metallad surface had ceased, but in that silence, somewhere in my imagination, I could still hear far in the distance a faint rumbling. My ear, somehow, could not shake off the symphony which it had heard for so long.

Can it be some other journeying person, I asked myself, and I strained my ears to listen. But no, it was not. It was difficult to convince myself so accustomed had my ear got to the sound.

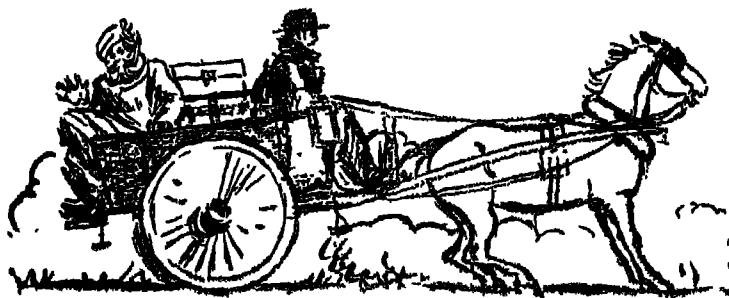
Meanwhile, old Parauti had deftly and silently, leapt off the footboard at the back and was lighting the candles. The matches were the old red-tipped Tanderstickers which burnt so long with blue flame before bursting into yellowed light. Silently, Parauti did his work but silently as he did it, every little sound he made echoed from the hollow bowl of space around us. The very snap of the lamp-clips, as he closed them, sounded like the distant crack of a gun—so intense was the silence.

As he turned to go back to his seat, suddenly, in the distance, I caught the sound of a faint cry. It was the cry of a woman—a woman in distress.

"Listen!" I said to Parauti. "Listen, it is some woman crying." Even in that half-light, I could see a look of terror come into Parauti's eyes as they flashed out their message of superstition and fear.

"It must be a *Churail*,, Sahib. Drive on, Sahib. Drive fast. Let us flee from her. It were better that we came face to face with the Thags than with a *Churail*. Drive faster, Sahib."

"Don't be a fool, Parauti!", I replied, "There is no such thing as a ghost—male or female. What is more, we seem to be getting nearer the sound for I can now hear it above the rumbling of the cart, so it hardly helps you if I drive faster."



The tremble which went through Parauti's frame was communicated to the lightly-built cart and I could perceptibly feel it even as we jogged along. "Sahib," he said in half-choking voice, "in your country there may be no *Churails*, but in India they are very common. My father was killed by one. O, Sahib, believe me that I speak the truth."

"Don't talk nonsense, Parauti!" I said, "Some silly idiot told you your father was killed by one and you believed it. It's all utter rubbish."

Parauti was silent. I think he must have been praying. The cry became more defined. Clearer and clearer it came, but in the gathering darkness, I could discern no object. Now, it seemed right by the roadside. And then I saw an object—just a shadow under the over-hanging branches of a low pipal tree.

I drew up.

"Sahib, Sahib, for God's sake, don't stop," begged Parauti, "It's a *Ohurail*, Sahib. I swear on God, it's a *Churail*." "Keep your silly tongue still," I said sharply, "I must question this old woman."

In the dingy glow of my candle-lamp on the near side of the road, I could see her—an old decrepit hag with deep lines of age across her face. Sycorax was outclassed. She rose wearily to her feet and all humped and huddled, moved slowly towards the cart.

Juno, who was usually as steady as a rock, veered away from the approaching apparition; but I steadied her. Parauti, who was never slow to respond to the call of duty, was cowering in a veritable tornado of fear at the back of the cart and never attempted to hold Juno. However, I realised his feelings and controlled the mare.

"What are you doing here?" I asked the old woman. With whining voice, she commenced her tale of woe. "My son," she said, "is dying in Sultanpore and I made an attempt to reach him but was benighted on the way. I am an old woman and cannot walk much at a stretch. I cry because I know not whether I shall see him alive to-morrow when I reach."

"Poor thing", I thought, "Surely I could help the old woman by giving her a lift on my trap," "Come on," I said, "I'll see you to Sultanpore." Then, turning to Parauti, I ordered him to help her on to the back of the cart where there was plenty of room for two.

"Villainous hag! *Churail*!" cried Parauti, "Would you deceive my Sahib?" and then turning to me he begged as I have never known a man to plead for life itself. "Sahib, I beg you, I beg you, for Mercy's sake: in the name of my only son, I beg you not to take this woman. She is a *Churail* and some dreadful misfortune will overtake us."

His excitement seemed so foolish that I lost all patience. "Look here, Parauti," I said "I've had enough of this, you hard-hearted brute. For the sake of a silly superstition, you wish to leave this poor old woman here with a breaking heart. Obey my order at once and help her up." Parauti was as a man struck dumb.

Torn between superstitious fear and a desire to obey as he was wont to do at all times, he seemed to sway where he stood. Before he could act, the old woman had laid trembling hold of the edge of the trap and with amazing litheness, had scrambled up.

Parauti seated himself at the very edge of the other side, his eyes peering out like blazing balls of fire, terror-stricken and almost distraught with fear. Seeing them both seated, I looked to my front again and drove on. It was only another mile to go and once or twice, I glanced back and saw that my human freight was safely ensconced at the back and Parauti's eyes were still fixed, still flashing fear, as I drove on. Soon, I could see a camp-fire in the distance and in front of that pale radiance, a horse was silhouetted. It was my next stage, and with some impatience, I urged Juno on.

Soon we were there, and I reined in. Parauti delayed a little in coming forward. "Parauti!" I called, "Hurry up, it's getting late. Have you got so fond of the old lady that you don't wish wish to——". I glanced back and as I did so, Parauti jumped off, but I could see no signs of the old woman.

At that moment I was filled with the most consuming rage. 'Scoundrel!' I cried, as I leapt off the cart and made towards Parauti, fully intending to beat him soundly in spite of his age, "Black-guard! You have knocked the old woman off on the way."

Parauti fell at my feet. His words melted my heart and made me control my temper. "Master., master," cried the venerable old man, "I have served you so long. I would give my life for you. My body is yours to beat. My life is yours to take. I swear before God that I never knocked the old woman off. She suddenly disappeared as we drew near this camp-fire. She just vanished into the air. I was so surprised myself, that I was looking in amazement where she sat when the cart stopped. Sahib, Believe your faithful servant, she was a *Churail*, a dangerous, damnable *Churail* and this has proved it."



I could not but notice the earnestness with which Parauti spoke. He was decidedly not lying consciously. I presumed, however, that what had happened was that the old woman had fallen off herself on the way, and Parauti, with his weak eyes, had not noticed it in the darkness. Harnessing my fresh horse, Caesar, I decided to drive back to the spot where I had last seen the old woman seated securely at the back.

It was only a mile and we covered the distance quickly but there was not a sign of the old woman. Then, like the sigh of the night-wind, I could hear a wail in the deep shadows of the forest to the northern flank of the road. With remarkable rapidity the voice came nearer and nearer.

In a moment, from the brushwood, a lone jackal suddenly broke, and slouched past. From the spot, almost immediately after, emerged the old woman, waddling along in doubled-up and crouched attitude. Caesar, who had let the jackal pass unmoved, now snorted and backed. He was a spirited animal, and Parauti ran up and held him. The old woman, still crying, commenced to repeat her story all over again in plaintive and whining voice.

"I've heard all that once", I said, "and I have no time to go over it again. It's getting late. Jump up now. When I reach my destination, you shall tell me how you fell off and if it was my syce who had something to do with it, I shall deal with him adequately there." The old woman did not seem to understand what I was talking about, but I took it that she was too old to grasp things quickly, and possibly demented as well, both with senility and with fears for her son's life. Once again, the old woman scrambled up with surprising alacrity.

"Now, let the horse go Parauti, and come on," I said. "Protector of the Poor," pleaded Parauti, "Let me sit at your feet, but not at the back with that *Churail*. If some misfortune should befall us, if this *Churail* should kill me, I wish to die with my head at your feet."

"Parauti, sit at the back as I have ordered you," I commanded, "and if that old woman should fall off again, I shall be certain that it is no accident but deliberate rascality on yo

part. It is now nearly 8 o'clock and I am too tired to sit and talk nonsense to you." Parauti, hesitated a moment. "Sit down!" I thundered and I started off.

Parauti was all but left behind. With a spring which would have done credit to a younger man, he leapt on to the footboard at the back and sat on the edge of it, glaring at the old woman. I drove on.

Cæsar was a splendid young waler and covered ground at a tremendous pace. It was the last lap of my journey and I thought hungrily of dinner. The furlong posts seemed to pass with kaleidoscopic rapidity, and then in the distance, I saw the lights of Sultaupore. What a thrill went through me! The tiredness the journey had wrought seemed to lift itself. Cæsar stepping high, with arched neck and strained nerves, was pressing onwards at a magnificent rate.

I looked round now and again to see that all was well with my antagonistic passengers. Both of them were sitting facing each other and now I noticed the old woman had opened her eyes wide and was staring wildly at Parauti. Parauti was glaring back at her. There was some-thing, however, in the old woman's eyes which I did not like. They were distinctly evil, but I took it that it was natural annoyance with one who had abused her and, possibly also, knocked her off.

In front, was a long dark avenue and my dingy lights made me peer into the vista lest I should meet a camel-cart or bullock-cart on the way, so near to civilisation. Once again, I looked back and saw the old woman and Parauti seated behind. But it was only a glance as my attention was focussed ahead.

Hardly had I turned, when I felt a sudden jerk as if a weight had come off from the back of the trap. I heard a blood-curdling cry—then a heavy thud. Cæsar leapt forward in frenzied manner and I pulled him in with all my strength, stopping him within a few paces. I seemed to be too stunned with the suddenness for the incident to realise what had happened. At first, it seemed to me that half the cart had fallen away. As I looked back, I found the cart was all right, but no one was on the footboard at the back.

And then, I heard a deep groan from a huddled-up figure on the road. I ran to Cæsar's head and turning him round, brought him up to the figure. The dim light now fell upon it: it was Parauti. I went a few paces further back, leading Cæsar, but could find no signs of the old woman. I returned to Parauti.

He was speaking in short, sharp jerks and almost inaudibly. Still holding Cæsar's reins, I knelt down by his side, with one hand on his shoulder, to listen. He slowly stretched out his hand and drew my foot to his head and then very gently, in a choking whispered voice, halting with each word, said "Master, I die happy because I die with my head at your feet. I know—I—am—dying. It—was the same—*Churail* who—killed my father. She threw me off—and—disappeared. Master, Sahib, I leave my son—to you. His—mother died long ago. Promise me—my Sahib—that you will be both father—and mother—to him." The last words were so faint I could hardly hear them and before I could speak, before I could clear the lump in my throat, Parauti's eyes closed.

I thought he had passed away, but to confirm the trust reposed in me, I said, "Parauti, depend on your Sahib. Your son will be safe. Poor Parauti! You were right." Just then Parauti opened his eyes again and looked straight into mine as if he understood, and then they glazed in death, still fixed upon me."

* * *

My father paused and for a full minute there was unbroken silence as he seemed to be gazing into the starspangled sky of that summer evening. And then, as he rose to go, he added, "I have kept my promise. Soman, your bearer is Parauti's son."

Nohri Chamar.

HE IS an old, old man now, bent and decrepit in appearance, hobbling along with the aid of a stick and hardly able to see a foot before him. He is my pensioned bearer, Nohri.

My earliest recollection of Nohri is of a man, pugilistic in frame, carrying over his shoulder a woman with her throat cut, *streaming with blood*. That was over three decades ago, when I was hardly out of my infancy. It was many years after that, I asked my father to tell me the details of that blood-curdling sight with which my child-mind was so deeply impressed. My father commenced in slow measured accents to give me the history of Nohri and how matters led up to the incident.

"It was long before you were born or even thought of," said my venerable old father, "that I was out camping in my magisterial capacity in the Azamgarh district. The advance tents for my next camp had been delayed in transit owing to the darkness of the night and the absence of a well-defined road. The result was that I arrived at my new camp to find all was not ready for me and the last tent was just being pitched. With nothing else to do for the moment, I sat and watched the pitching of the tent. It was a tent something after the Swiss Cottage type and my camp followers were assisted by enforced labour in the form of *chamars* from the neighbouring village.

My old orderly, Karamat, who was doing the least work, was spending his time abusing these poor ill-fed, half-clothed, low-caste labourers who were gloriously willing workers, but equally as gloriously ignorant of what a tent was or how it should be pitched.

Soon, the tent was up and the little band of ignorant *Chamars* slunk away like jackals from the scene. A young man amongst them lingered a little and then, with very hesitant manner, said to Karamat "Do *paisa mil jae* ? " ("Could I get 2 pice ? "). Karamat turned on him savagely. "Cheat ! " he yelled "One would think it was not enough honour done to you, son of a pig and eater of pigs, that you were privileged to put up the tent of the lord of this Tahsil and now you dare to ask for payment. Begone ! or I shall break every bone in your body."

The old autocrat was shaking with resentment and was distinctly insulted at so insolent a request. The young chainar smiled apologetically and folding his hands, stood, on one leg as a sign of humility, begging to be forgiven for the offence he had given. "Don't stand here like a vulture then," snapped Karamat, "Be off, don't you see the *Sahib Bahadur* is sitting there ?"

The young man, looking wistfully in my direction, slunk away. I watched the whole proceeding interestedly and then, as the man was moving off, I said "Karamat, call that man to me." "*Huzur*" said Karamat smartly, as he called to the man thus, "Here, you low-bred carcase-eater, come back here. The *Sahib* wants you." And he added confidentially, "You presumptuous knave ! I told you to clear off. Now, you shall get your leather taken off you for your insolence."

The young man, with a look of terror in his eyes, trembling with apprehension, approached in suppliant attitude. "Mercy, mercy, *Sahib*," he cried in the coarsest accents, "I have sinned. Forgive me. I shall never do it again." He would not give me a chance to speak, so importunate was he in begging forgiveness. "Shut up," shouted Karamat, "Stop braying like a donkey."

The man stood on one leg, with folded hands and looked as if he was going to receive sentence of death. "What is it you want ? " I asked as kindly as I could.

" I—I only want forgiveness, King of the World. Forgive me", he bleated. "No, no," I said rather impatiently, "What did you want from the *chaprasi* ? " " I am a jungly man, Protector of the Poor, I am a fool. Forgive me. I foolishly asked for two pice," he wailed, "I'll never do it again. Forgive me, judge of all men."

" Karamat," I said, "Give him two annas from my account. You certainly should pay these poor devils who help in pitching tents."

Karamat's face fell. " Very well, *Huzur*; but oh ! my father, my father, this will thoroughly spoil the custom, *Sahib*, and these miserable low-caste worms of the earth will completely lose their heads. Forgive me, *Huzur*, for presuming to warn your noble self of this impending danger."

" Don't argue," I said sternly. "Pay him and let him go and, in future, you will pay all such helpers in my presence."

Meekly, Karamat obeyed, and the young man *salamed* deeply. He was just moving off when I said, "Wait, I want to talk to you. What is your name ? " " Nohri," he said hesitatingly. "How old are you ?" I asked.

" I am about twelve years of age," he said innocently. "Idiot!" snapped Karamat from behind me. "You are twelve years of age ! What an enormous ass you are. You cannot tell the truth and say you are about twenty-five., Liar !"

"Karamat," I said gently reproving him, "Let me talk to this man and don't interfere."

"So you say you are about twelve years of age?" I said reassuringly, knowing twenty-five was a correct estimate. "No, *Malik*" he replied quickly, "I must be twenty-five. The *Chapraasi Sahib* says I am twenty-five."

"Have you any brothers?" I asked.

"Yes! *Malik*, one."

"How old is he?"

"He must be 50 or 60, because he is older than I am."

I gave up talking of ages as I realised figures conveyed no meaning to him.

"Are you married?" I asked.

"Yes! *Malik*."

"Have you any children?"

"Yes! *Malik*, two sons and four daughters."

"What?" I exclaimed in surprise, "You have six children!"

"Yes! *Malik*" said Nohri "You see it is this way. My father was a very poor man and could not afford to get me married till a very late age." He seemed to think my surprise was that he had not got more than six children!

Just then my *khidmatgar* announced breakfast and I dismissed Nohri and went into my tent.

I was three days at that camp and every day, I saw Nohri somewhere on the borders of the grove. As soon as he saw my eyes on him, he would slink away lest I should be annoyed. The time now came to move to the next camp and Nohri was back again, helping to unpitch the tents. As I was riding off, Nohri came running after me and I could hear Karamat's angry voice shouting after him, "Come back here, insolent knave. Come back, presumptuous worm."

Nohri, however, was determined to risk everything, and running up alongside of my horse, prostrated himself on the ground. "*Malik, Malik,*" he pleaded, "let me go with your camp. I want to serve you." "But in what capacity can I take you?" I said, "I have got my permanent staff of personal servants and need no others."

"I shall pitch your tents at every camp, *Sahib*. Only give me enough for one meal a day. Let me come," he pleaded. The request was so earnest, I could not resist it.

"Very well," I replied, "You may come."

At the next camp, Nohri was there, furiously busy. He seemed to walk with an air of importance now, and even tried to tell the *chamars* at the next camp how many sorts of fools they were and how ignorant each of them was in the matter of pitching tents. Was he not the permanent *protem coolie* of the 'Lord of the *Pargana*!'

The winter months passed, and with them, the days for touring. Finally, at the end of March, just as the harvest was ripening and high winds had commenced to blow, the last camp was reached. The next move was to headquarters and just as I was preparing to go, Nohri ran up to me with very sad and distressed face.

"Well, Nohri," I said, "You must go back to your village and next December when I start touring again I shall appoint you a camp follower once more." I could see a real tear glisten in his eye as I spoke. "O! Protector of the Poor. Let me come to headquarters with you. I'll do any form of work you want—anything, on any wage. Don't turn me out, *Malik*."

It was then, a thought struck me—and I said, “Wait, let me see—I shall need a *punkha-cooli* (fan-puller) in a few days, so go home now, and come to me at Azamgarh on the 1st April”, and I chuckled to myself to think how suitable the day was to the appointee. Nohri’s face brightened up. “Very good, *Malik*. Very good,” he said, “I shall come.”

At dawn on the 1st of April, my dog barked furiously and persistently at something at the gate. I sent Karamat to see what it was. I did not need Karamat to return to know what it really was, “This is the worst of you miserable lowbreeds”, he was shrieking in a high-pitched voice. “The idea, the cheek of you arriving at this time of the morning and disturbing the sleep of the *Sahib Bahadur*. A little bit of encouragement and you low-born scoundrels get thoroughly spoilt and out of hand. And, then, like a *Nawab* you needs must enter by the front gate——” And so he kept on haggling like a splenetic old woman.

I called out in stentorian voice, “Karamat! Is it Nohri? Let him come.” “*Huzur*,” came back Karamat’s respectful reply in disgusted tones.

In a moment, Nohri arrived accompanied by Karamat. A row of white teeth, peeping out from a darkly-bronzed face, told of the joy and pride with which he had come to take up his new post.

He was dressed only in a loin-cloth and over his shoulder, was a small piece of bamboo from which was suspended a dirty-looking bundle about the size of a water-melon. This was all the worldly property he carried. The bundle contained a brightly-polished brass vessel which Nohri had inherited from his father and the rest was ground gram or what he called ‘*sattu*.’

“How on earth did you arrive so early?” I said, “Your village must be 26 miles from here,”

"I started last evening," said Nohri, "Just as the sun was going down."

"But weren't you afraid of *thags* on the way?" I queried.

"No, *Malik*," he replied with a look of amusement on his face, "Why should *thags* want to waylay me? I am a poor man, and had nothing which could be useful to them."

I rose to go inside to dress and as I went, I told Karamat to instruct Nohri how the fan was to be pulled. I thought it would be interesting to watch the lesson through the chink in the door.

Karamat gripped the rope and gently pulled and released it in regular sweeping motion, while Nohri watched him, greatly amused. "What are you grinning for, you insolent knave?" snapped Karamat. Nohri's countenance became immediately somnolent. "Here, take," said Karamat handing the string over.

No Viceroy of India seized the reins of authority with greater pride and enthusiasm than Nohri grasped at that rope. "Now, pull," said Karamat. I saw the muscles harden up on Nohri's shoulder and thighs. Shutting his eyes, he gave one almighty jerk to the rope: the connecting cane smashed and Nohri went backwards, rolling on the ground, holding up in his hand the rope attached to the broken piece of cane.

The annoyance, the disgust of Karamat at that moment is beyond description. With utter contempt, he exclaimed, "May your soul burn in hell-fire, you miserable idiot! Do you imagine you are hauling a *dol* (leathern bucket) out of a well? You coarsened *chamars* do not understand the delicate nature of tasks assigned to a servant in the house of an English Sahib."

Nohri scrambled to his feet rather badly bruised, but terror was written in his eyes as he looked at the broken cane in his hand. "*Dohai (mercy) Chaprasi Sahib*," he cried, "I have committed an unpardonable fault." "RapsCALLION!" cried Karamat, "The price of six canes will be deducted from your pay at the end of the month and one of these broken pieces I shall keep to flay your hide for you next time you commit such a fault."

A new cane was then brought and fixed. Nohri, holding the rope gently and tremblingly, drew it with the utmost caution. And soon the lesson was learnt. I came out to find the punkha swinging away, Nohri sitting in the *baramdah*, steadily pulling.

Nohri had been assiduously performing his duty for a whole week when one day, I heard him whisper to Karamat who sat at the door, "*Chaprasī Sahēb*, I see something moving inside." Old Karamat was in a doze, and woke up with a start. "Something moving! Where?" he asked. "Is it a stray dog that has got in?"

"No, no," said Nohri, "It is moving in the air. A think it is a ghost."

"But where?" said Karamat, "I don't see it at all."

"There, there, *Chaprasī Sahib*," said Nohri with increasing excitement, "It comes and goes every now and then."

And Nohri pointed to the end of the punkha frill as it came into sight every time he pulled the rope.

Karamat turned on him with contempt, "That! That's the punkha, you fool. You have been a week in the Sahib's service, but you continue the same. Can a *chamar* ever get civilised? Go on with your work and don't talk again."

Gradually, the summer passed with its long long hot days and the monsoon burst, and that season too swung past with its insects and depression and humidity. On the 1st of October I had to relieve Nohri of his fan-pulling duties and tell him to go home. But no! he was determined to be kept on. He begged on bended knees not to be dismissed. Once again, I fell to his pleading and I allowed him to stay on as a general help to the bearer. He would clean my shoes till they glistened and he looked upon lamps with a keen and scientific eye, considering their mechanism absolutely wonderful.

A year later, I was transferred, but Nohri would not leave me. He insisted that he would stay on in my service for the rest of his days. So he came with me.

For years, he followed me from posting to posting."

My father paused to light a cigar and then continued, "Well, it was about seven years after Nohri came into my service that I was married and then you children came into my life. Nohri was more gentle with you as babies than a woman could be and so I appointed him as full bearer to look after you."

"But what about the murderous incident you were going to tell me about?" I asked eagerly.

'I am coming to that,' said my father. "Let me take you through Nohri's history, step by step.—Well, you were only two years of age when Nohri, who had cared for you so tenderly, was one day, filled with a desire to see his own children again.

" 'May I have ten days' leave and go home, *Sahib*?' he asked. 'Well, ten days' leave after ten years' service is not an extravagant claim,' I thought. 'Yes! certainly', I said, and a far-away look came into Nohri's eyes as he conjured visions of his little thatched home far away and his loved ones waiting for his return. 'I had a dream last night, *Sahib*,' he said 'that my family is in trouble. I left them two *bighas* of land but as they were only tenants-at-will they could be ejected at any time by the *Zamindar* and I wonder if this forbodes evil.'

" 'Yes ! if you feel like that, go by all means,' I said. His eyes now gleamed with joy as he said, 'My boys must be quite big now. May I bring my eldest son with me, Sahib ? Give him some work in your own establishment and he will serve you as I have done.'

" 'Very well, Nohri. Bring him along,' I assented. Here, my father's voice just seemed to choke a little, but he continued. 'A new hope seemed to spring up in Nohri's heart. He had put away Rs. 36 during his service and this to him was a great fortune. He commenced to purchase presents for the various members of his family. Before he left he brought and showed them to me with great pride.

There was a steel trunk for Re. 1-8 and two brass vessels for Re. 1-13-9 which he had haggled for and bought for his wife. There were four *saris* (dress cloths) for his daughters and two brass-bound sticks for his sons. With all these extravagant(?) purchases, his capital had come down to Rs. 29-7-9 but he waited for pay-day and, taking his Rs. 5-8, to add to his hoarded wealth, he prepared to leave.



Trains were now running to Azamgarh, and Nohri had worked it out in his mind how he would pay Re. 1-9-3 for his fare and after the purchase of some sweetmeats for his children and some good rice for the home, he would have something over Rs. 30 to spend on the weddings of at least two of his daughters which he was determined to arrange during the course of the ten days he was on leave.'

"At last, the moment for his departure arrived and he bid us all respectful goodbye and went. I watched him go. From the bungalow, his room in the servants' quarters was plainly visible.

He put on the old pair of ammunition boots I gave him a year before, he donned an old overcoat which I had presented to him two years after he came to me. Under his arm, he carried an umbrella which was an acquisition in which he took especial pride. Along with the umbrella were the two brass-bound sticks for his sons, and on his shoulder, the steel trunk containing the the *saris* and brass vessels.

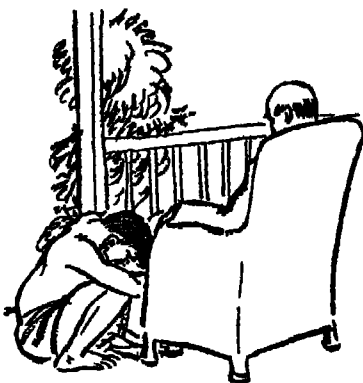
"And so, Nohri, with merry heart and buoyant stride, stepped out of the compound, to the Railway Station."

* * *

Again, my father paused and looked intently into the fine smoke which went curling upwards from his cigar.

I was just about to ask him again, "But what about the incident?" when he continued, very slowly :—

"You," he said, "were a very little fellow then and I remember that nothing could console you when you discovered that Nohri had gone. Anyhow, even to your mother and myself, the house looked different. Something seemed missing and that something was Nohri.



"However, two days passed and late in the evening of the third day, as I was sitting out in the *baramdah* an apparition appeared before me, and then it sank down on the ground and held my feet. I could hardly realise what it was and yet, in that twilight, I could discern a familiar face for the momentary period that the apparition started at me before it fell at my feet. It was Nohri.

He was dressed as I saw him first, ten years before, in a loin-cloth all bespattered with mud that had dried upon it. His cheeks were hollowed. His eyes were deeply sunk and staring. He could not speak. And then, a low moan came from his huddled body as he gripped my feet tighter. Suddenly, he found his voice and the moan became a cry as he said, '*Sahib*, I have lost everything—everything—but you.' I was amazed. 'Could this wreck be Nohri?' I asked myself. 'He who had gone out so happily in the full health and vigour of a young man only three days ago?'

'Whatever has happened?' I asked in alarm, 'Tell me. Calm yourself, and tell me.'

Nohri began. '*Sahib*,' he said, 'as I was approaching my village trying to catch a sight of my old home, I met the *Zamindar*. He could not recognise me when I salamed him and asked me who I was. 'I am Nohri,' I replied, 'don't you know?' 'Nohri! Nohri *chamar*!' he said, 'and you dare to come into the village precincts with boots on your feet and an umbrella over your head and an English coat on your body? Have you forgotten your origin; that you belong to the lowest of the low and that you insult my dignity by coming in this garb into my village?' On saying this, *Sahib*, he ordered his men to snatch away all I had, leaving me in this loin-cloth. He then had me beaten, and you will see the lacerated wounds on my back. Then, he sent me into the fields to work—not because the work was necessary *Sahib*—but because he said he wanted me to realise my position, and from what stock I came.

“ ‘But, surely, he returned your things to you later ?’ I asked.

“ ‘No, Sahib, he did not, but I did not want them back either. Listen to me, Sahib. Listen to my tale of woe to the end.’

Nohri continued, ‘It was midnight, Sahib, before I was taken, under escort of the *Zaminder*’s servants, to the *zilla* where the *Zamindar* lives. There, I was ordered to be put into a room for the night. And all the time, I was longing to see my home and my wife and children again. I could not sleep and the desire to be free, overpowered me. I decided to try and escape. Gradually, I lifted the thatched roof and after hours of effort, I slipped out unnoticed..

It was then dawn and how changed my village looked. I hastened to my home, but there, to my horror, I saw only a ruin. I went then to my brother, Jagat, to enquire from him where my family had gone. Jagat had grown grey and could not recognise me. He was delighted when he found who I was. I was impatient to find my family. ‘Jagat,’ I said, ‘where is my *prani* (soul) and where are my children ? I see the old home is in ruins.’

Jagat looked surprised, and then said, ‘Have something to eat and I shall tell you.’ But I was impatient and I said, ‘I cannot eat, I cannot think. I must know where I can find them.’ Then, I seemed to drift into a dream as I could hear Jagat’s voice speaking ‘Your family,’ he said, ‘have lifted their tents and gone to Parmes-har long long ago. Shortly after you left, the *Zamindar* demanded that your wife should become his mistress and when she refused he took away her tenancy. I fed them for some time and your wife continued to look forward eagerly to your return. Then, she got the impression that you were dead, and one day in a fit of despondency, she jumped into a well with her two youngest children. Before we could get them out, they were all dead. Then plague swept the village the following year and the remainder of your children.—.’

Nohri's voice broke. He could not finish the sentence; but I felt his whole frame shaking beneath me.

"Nohri was never the same man again. The merry twinkle in his eye had gone. He was usually grave as he went through his daily tasks. He seemed, after that, to enjoy placing himself in danger. If there was a snake to kill, Nohri dashed forward to slay it with a lathi. If in camp, a hyena laughed its hideous laugh into the night air, Nohri was out on the war-path to meet it. If a mad dog darted into the compound,, Nohri was after it with any sort of implement he could pick up. He seemed to care not a bit for his life, and to thoroughly enjoy taking risks."

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My father paused again and lit another cigar. Then he went on rather more rapidly than he had hitherto done.

"At that time our *bhisti* (water bearer) was a man named Barkat: a powerfully built young fellow, with a goat-beard, blood-shot eyes and a pretty little wife in *purdah*. This girl came over to the bungalow one day to see your mother who was astonished at her delicate loveliness. She could not have been more than 15 years of age, said she was of Mogul descent, and had great sweeping eyelashes and a light olive complexion. Barkat was most jealous of her, but he made it a daily habit of beating her unmercifully over the most trivial domestic occurrences. Sometimes, it was because his food was burnt, at other times, because it was not cooked enough, and at yet other times, when it was not cooked to time. The poor girl—hardly out of her childhood—was most unhappy. Imprisoned within four walls, with nothing to do but to cook food and await the return of her lord and master, Barkat, she lived in her lonely solitariness through the dull routine of her life.

The out-office which Barkat occupied was the only double-storeyed one in the compound and his little wife spent her days in the upper storey—the lower one being kept by Barkat for the entertainment of his friends.

"It was a hot June day that you children were playing in the back garden under the superintendence of your bearers, Nohri and Soman. Hearing your shrieks of delight, Barkat's wife partially opened her attic window to look at the game which was in full swing. Barkat happened to pass that way and suddenly his eyes fell in that direction..

He frowned angrily as he caught a glimpse of his wife behind the half-closed window. At that moment, dark thoughts clouded his vision. He assumed, at once, that his wife was attempting to attract the attention of these two young bearers, and he planned his revenge.

"It was just as we had sat down to dinner that we heard the cry of a woman's voice coming from the direction of Barkat's house. 'There's that devil Barkat beating his wife again', I said. 'Probably his dinner is not ready.' Soon, the cries became more insistent and tumultuous. Then, there were shrieks which rang out with guttural sound. In a moment, Nohri hurried into the room, saying in wild excitement, '*Sahib, Sahib* ! Barkat is murdering his wife. There he is at his window.'

I sprang to my feet and ran out, shouting for a lantern with which we hurried to the spot. There, in that dingy light, we could see Barkat holding his wife's hair with one hand and with the other, drawing a table knife slowly and deliberately backwards and forwards across her neck. She was struggling ineffectually, with both her delicate hands, to push aside the strong right arm of her husband as it was carrying out its murderous task. On

Barkat's face was a broad, diabolical smile. His lips were murmuring, 'For this offence I should really cut off your nose, but I prefer to start lower down.'

'Let her go, you scoundrel', I shouted. 'Let her go. I command you to let her go.'

" 'When my deed is done' said Barkat. 'I shall let her go and I shall hand myself up to you. You can hang me after that, I care not.' And all the time the knife kept flashing backwards and forwards till the woman's voice became more guttural and faint. Soman was hurling himself at the lower door to get access to the upper room and suddenly, I saw a ladder go up under the attic and Nohri was nimbly climbing up, unarmed.

'Come nearer and I shall plant this knife into your neck, Barkat yelled at him. Nothing daunted, Nohri climbed on and, like a flash, he had grasped Barkat's hand and twisted it with tremendous force. The knife, still held in Barkat's hand, was now pointing upwards streaming with blood.

'Jump on my shoulder," Nohri cried to the woman. 'Quick!' As she jumped, Barkat fell with her, and Nohri, still grasping his wrist with a grip like death, slung him aside with furious force. He fell senseless to the ground below in a pool of blood and Nohri descended with the unfortunate woman on his shoulder.

" 'Take her to the memsahib,' I ordered. 'Soman, run along as fast as you can go and call the doctor.' "

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Once again, my father paused for a moment. Then he continued :—

"That was the time you saw this sight. Well! the doctor came, but the woman was unconscious by then. He shook his head and said 'Little hope; but one never knows.'

" 'Now, doctor,' I said, 'will you come and see the murderer?' He lay where he had fallen. He was dead.

" To our surprise the woman lived, but she was only able to speak in whispers ever after.

" And that's all there is in the story" said my father as he got up from his easy chair. "He's a splendid fellow—Nohri."

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It was many years after this that a funeral procession passed along the road. It was my father's. Far behind the long line of mourners, a little band of decrepit servants, the old faithfuls, followed. There was Ramzan Khan, the grandest of them all, bordering on 90 years of age, who had carried my father in his arms. There was little old Ganga, a grass-cutter, who had risen to the rank of syce, and there was Nohri—good old Nohri. In every eye glistened a tear.

A decade and more has passed since then and after many years of absence from Allahabad, I returned and saw old Nohri. He was sitting on a stone slab on which he was assiduously scratching at something with head bent low. I approached him silently and looked over his shoulder while he was unconscious of my presence.

On the slab was written, NOHRI *Sirdar*. "What are you up to?" I asked. The old man looked up with a start and said, "*Baba*, I know your voice. You are Lancee *Baba*" He touched

my feet and gripped my arm fervently in both his hands. "Yes ! you're right", I said, as Nohri tried to strain his dimmed old eyes to look into my face and see me, "But what are you doing with this slab ? "

" Oh ! *Baba*," he said, still addressing me as he did in the long-ago when I was a child, "I am making my gravestone. My time has come and I want to be buried at my old master's feet." It would have been cruel to disillusion him as to the impossibility of burying him in a Christian graveyard. "As I was with him in life, so I wish to be with him in death," said the old man fervently. "Every night, I smell his cigar near my house and I know that his spirit is with me."

" But you are a Hindu, Nohri" I argued. "You cannot be buried. You must be cremated and made over to Mother Ganges in the end."

" *Baba*," said the old man, his eyes brimming with tears. "I know not Mother Ganges. I had one god. He was your father. Bury me at his feet. Promise me, *Baba*. This will be the last wish of your old bearer. Promise me", he pleaded.

I passed it off. " Dont't talk about death, Nohri," I said, "You'll live to be a hundred yet. So there is lots of time to arrange, things. Here's a rupee. Now, have a jolly good drink and make up your mind to outbeat me in the race of life."

I patted the old man on the back and came away.

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To those who are sceptical let me say, old Nohri is not a myth. He is to-day in Allahabad; and in the out-offices of a house on Cawnpore Road you will find him, sitting on his slab, preparing to meet his master and his "god"—the only god he knows.



Ramzan Khan.

OF THE splendid 'old faithfuls' who have served my family in India, the grandest of them all was Ramzan Khan. There is no memorial I can erect adequate to his memory. There are no words which could bespeak eloquently enough the gloriousness of his devotion. There is no loyalty which could surpass his. There is no service I have seen which was more devoted, more self-sacrificing, purer, grander than that of Ramzan Khan. In illness or in health, he stood staunch to his post. With fever wracking his bones, at 90 years of age, we had to quarrel with him because he refused to go home and take to his bed. His is a memory which can never be forgotten by any member of my family. His life was a sermon to others who would serve. It was more; it was a sermon to his masters. To me, personally, his memory is a golden link that chains me in bonds of love for India for ever. As a humble tribute to his glorious memory I have attempted to indite this little poem which, however, touches only on the fringe of Ramzan Khan's great and devoted services to my grandfather, the late Philip Niblett, J.P., and the generations which followed him.]



FIVE and seventy years ago, in our good old Hindustan,
 Lived a dashing Indian soldier—a handsome young Pathan.
 He rode his horse with pride as he galloped with his lance.
 With its pennant flowing free and his arm at full advance.
 Splendid trooper! Ramzan Khan.

In stature he was small, but his body was erect,
 As he trotted to parade in his uniform bedeck'd;
 There was fire in his eye and a down upon his chin,
 With his *pugri** neatly tied o'er his bronzed and ruddy skin.
 Good old warrior! Ramzan Khan.

Then, there came the fateful year of 'Eighteen-fifty-seven'
 With its Mutiny, and oh! 'twas Hell where there was Heav'n!
 Disaffection spread around: the disturbers of the peace
 Spread a canard that the Army was supplied with lard as grease
 He also heard it, did Ramzan Khan.

The rumour spread like wild-fire: the troops were in revolt;
 They massacred their Officers; 'twas like a thunderbolt!
 They looted all they could and they ravaged every town,
 And their war-cry it was "Down! with the curs'd
Firingi,† down!"

'Twas otherwise with Ramzan Khan.

* *Pugri* — Head-dress.

† *Firingi* — Foreigner.

He sprang upon his charger and galloped to the Mess
 To defend his British leaders 'gainst mutinous excess.
 But alas ! before he reached, the deed it had been done,
 The floor was strewn with corpses; the mutineers had run.
 He wept—did Ramzan Khan.

Then, he made for Civil Lines to speak about the crime
 To warn the Europeans of the danger of the time.
 'Twas then he hotly rode to the lonely bungalow
 Of the English Treas'ry Officer and told his tale of woe.
 "Flee, *Sahib*, flee," said Ramzan Khan.

"I'll go with you," he said—he was looking deathly ill—
 "My own beloved *Sahibs* are lying stark and still ;
 "Oh ! *Sahib*, let me save you and your children from this Hell,
 As a token of devotion to the *Sa'bs* I've loved so well,"
 Said the gallant Ramzan Khan.

As he spoke, there came a noise of bedlam on the road,
 A shrieking of the mob, as they near and nearer strode,
 "They're coming in their hundreds, they're beating at the gate,
 "Flee, *Sahib*, flee—before it is too late,"
 Hoarsely whispered Ramzan Khan.

Without a moment to be lost or a minute to prepare,
 The family of five—their faces drawn with care—
 Rushed distraught through the house and left it from the back,
 Each parent held a child, and as for little Jack,
 He followed, in the arms of Ramzan Khan.

Unnoticed, now they sped, with the bungalow between
 The mutineers and them, till they gained the far ravine,
 Through that long secluded valley, they trudged along apace
 Till the shadows of the evening closed on India's sunny face.

"Rest, *Sahib*, now," said Ramzan Khan.

Before the breaking of the dawn, they were on the march again,
 Till they reached the Grand Trunk Road and a wild deserted
 plain,

There, they found a broken culvert, with a hollowed cave
 inside,

'Twas a haven for the footsore and the weary to abide.

He left them there, did Ramzan Khan.

Through the hot and dreary day, they could hear, at intervals,
 The rumbling bullock-carts and the tinkling of their bells;
 Then, a cavalcade of rebels came clattering on their way,
 Crying thirstily, "*Firingi*" †—All India was at bay!

But not so—Ramzan Khan.

As the darkness gathered round, they heard a steady pace
 Approaching every moment, their secret hiding-place:
 The anxious parents' eyes fill'd with horror and with fear,
 "We're discovered! We're betrayed!" They prayed for
 Heav'n to hear,
 But it was only Ramzan Khan.

† *Firingi* — Foreigner.

He brought them two *chapatis*, †his face was full of care,
 "This was all I could procure, *Sahib* forgive the humble fare.'
 For sixty-seven days, the family remained
 In that subterranean home, praying, hoping and sustained
 By the care of Ramzan Khan.

The Mutiny suppressed and peace again restored,
 The family emerged, but the babe that they adored
 Had gone where babies go, to the Fairyland of God,
 Its body laid to rest and covered with the sod,
 By the gentle hands of Ramzan Khan,

From that troublous dreadful time, for seventy years and more,
 He served the family—through generations four.
 His beard turn'd snowy-white, his body bent and frail :
 Through the rolling years of Time, loyalty the "Grail"
 Of the faithful Ramzan Khan.

A year or two ago, he went to see his home,
 In a little village town with many a mosque and dome:
 One night, he fell asleep: "in Christ" it must have been:
 His—the purest, whitest soul that India's ever seen.
 He's now in Heaven—is Ramzan Khan.

* *Chapatis* — Indian cakes.



INDIAN SERVANTS I HAVE KNOWN.

I.—Salik Barkandaz.

MANY OF those who have read my "Flashlights of India" have lamented the fact that servants of the type described in the chapters entitled "Old Faithfuls" are a relic of the past, unknown to the present age. Well, they are right and yet they are wrong.

True, we do not find to-day Indian servants who are prepared to devote a life's service to their masters, but still there are often incidents, in their more transient service which bespeak eloquently their wonderful devotion in times of peril. An incident of this nature which comes forcefully to my mind is that of a Barkandaz (we called them 'Barking Dogs' in the Opium Department where such officials are employed), who risked his life in an heroic attempt to save that of my wife.

Salik was a *pahlwan* or wrestler when he was not 'barking' away villagers from my table where he stood on guard as a sort of orderly. His skin was almost blue-black (a colour, by the way, which is much admired in Hindu society for it was the complexion of the god, who is their *beau ideal*, Lord Krishna). His build was wonderful. No hard muscles protruding out at various angles all over his body, but under the smooth ebony of his skin they could be perceived rolling in ripples. I thought there was too much fat on them till one day I was disillusioned.

I asked Salik to teach me wrestling. He hesitated and asked to be excused as he felt that it was beneath my dignity to wrestle with him. I, however, insisted that he should, I felt like a child in his grip, but he always hesitated to throw me at the critical moment.

I was convinced before long that he was merely playing with me, and I asked him to wrestle seriously and throw me if he could. He gave an apologetic smile and lifting me like a babe in his arms laid me on my back within a couple of seconds as gently as a nurse would lay an infant in its cot.

I then knew the real power of this man. He was wonderful that is the only description I can give of him. And I remember the day when I arrived at a Camp to find Salik was never to wrestle again. He had gone to sleep in the grove, and on arrival of the advance tents during the night a fully-loaded bullock-cart had gone over his thigh. On seeing me, though in excruciating agony, he sprang up on one leg and salaamed me. He laughed the incident over, but his leg gradually withered away, leaving him a cripple.

But the incident I am going to describe occurred before this accident when Salik was still in the possession of all his magnificent strength and activity.

It was a Christmas shooting party at my camp in the year 1921. We had gone out on elephants to a *jheel* where we had splendid sport. The elephants had been tethered within earshot of us and they were excited over the frequent reports of gunfire.

On our return journey my wife, Capt. G. and I mounted a young male who exhibited more than usual excitement. He made repeated attempts to bolt but was curbed by the *mahout's* (driver's)

iron weapon which was shaped like a hatchet. By the time we reached the camp his head was lacerated with the punishment and goading he had received—all necessary too to keep him under control.

It was just getting dusk. The elephant refused to sit down to enable us to dismount. After considerable difficulty the *mahout* forced him down on his knees and Capt. G. and I slipped off on to the ground to hold my wife as she descended. My gun was in my hand and evidently the elephant scented the smoke from its barrels. With a terrible ear piercing scream he raised himself up and ran. It was all the work of a moment. The driver was hacking hard at his head, to subdue him but all to no effect. He dashed off to the adjoining grove, my wife clinging for dear life to the ropes of the saddle which seemed to be gradually loosening out.

Men dashed out from every tent and each was shouting directions to the driver. The elephant, with upraised trunk, was trumpeting with maddened agony and fear. After an herculean effort the *mahout* managed to steer the brute back to our camp and Capt. G. and I again slowly approached to help my wife off. No sooner were we half-a-dozen yards away, the elephant turned on us and as quickly turned away and ran.

As he reached the adjoining grove we saw a sight that made our hearts stand still. The elephant was shaking his head furiously and trying to jam the driver up against the trunk of a tree. The driver fell. In an instant he was up again and, conscious of the impending danger, ran from tree to tree while the elephant gave chase. The *mahout* was too quick and the leviathan animal could not turn fast enough to reach his adversary. He at last gave up the chase and the driver returned to our grove by a long detour.

Meanwhile we were watching the elephant, powerless to do anything to help. If we approached him he would perhaps run out of sight and it was almost dark. We thought of shooting him but hesitated as we thought of the consequences should we only wound him and in his fall he should throw my wife. He would certainly trample her to death. Then we saw the beast trying to stretch his trunk backwards to lay hold of my wife who was lying flat on her face on the saddle. Not succeeding, he tried to rub her off against over-hanging branches while she clung on like grim death. The rope of the saddle was now dangling and the saddle itself was gradually slipping off.

It was then, when all hope seemed to be gone and we waited only for the moment to see the awful tragedy enacted in our presence, that Salik suddenly dashed forward and threw his clothes off, tearing them in his haste. In a few moments he stood before us in only a loin-cloth. "He is afraid of your clothes, *Sahib*" he said "If he tramples me to death I shall rescue the *Memsahib*." He had hardly finished the sentence when he was off.

Like lightning he moved from tree to tree till he got within a few paces of the elephant, approaching it from the back. With a sudden dart, he ran up to the haunches of the elephant with arms out-stretched. "Jump, *Memsahib*, Jump" he cried.

But the elephant was too quick. Before my wife could decide to jump or realise that her rescuer was there, the elephant turned and made one mad rush at Salik. The saddle started slipping to the ground now with remarkable rapidity. We felt it was all finished and the only hope was to drive the elephant off the saddle when it did alight on the ground. So we rushed forward shouting as hard as we could. But we would not have been in time for it was too far away. At this moment Salik used his head

as well as his agility. He sprang aside and as the elephant turned its massive form to charge him again, he sprang back and then straight forward into the side of the animal, shouting as he did so for my wife to jump.

With quick decision and knowing that it was her last chance for she was by now clinging to the ropes on the sides of the elephant my wife jumped and Salik caught her in his arms and ran to a tree near the tail of the elephant and from there to the next tree before the cumbersome brute could turn on him. Once the elephant saw them in front of him he charged again, smashing one of the smaller trees which came in his way. Just then a thought struck me and I fired off both barrels of my gun as I was approaching Salik.

This was enough for the elephant. He dropped his trunk, he shed his saddle and ran out trumpeting into the night till we could hear him no more. He was found three days later 28 miles away.

This incident happened at Camp Barhaj in the Gorakhpur District on the 28th December, 1921.

I offered Salik a large reward. He was only earning a pay of Rs. 10-8 a month and the reward was all the more attractive. He refused it. I insisted, and Salik took the whole of the reward and presented it at the Barhaj Temple as a thanksoffering for the saving of the *Memsahib's* life. Splendid young brave! He's the most courageous man I know. I take my hat off to Salik.



11.—Pirwa Khansama

HIS EYES were large with a look of simplicity almost amounting to inanity of expression. His manner was awkward to a degree as he raised his hands to his head to say salaam. He handed me a scrap of paper which he said was his "sartiphitak" and he added that it was his only testimonial,, but that he had had it read by a Babuji who had told him it was sufficient to obtain for him an excellent appointment, as the Sahib had said in it that he should get "*bahut bhari naukari.*"

I opened out the folds of the paper and there I read. "Pirwa has served me for six months. He is thoroughly honest and willing. I would advise anyone wanting a good cook to give him a berth—and a wide one at that." I could not resist a smile and Pirwa looked approvingly at me as if to say he know so excellent a testimonial would make me happy. As honesty and willingness were things I desired most I took Pirwa on.

"Do you know how to make Bake-well Pudding?" asked my wife as she prepared to give him orders for dinner. He sprung to attention and said "O, yes *memsahib*, but I would like to know what the *dastur* (custom) in your house is with regard to this pudding and I shall make it exactly according to your taste."

My wife rapidly rattled off a recipe which evidently did not percolate into Pirwa's mind at all. "Oh, yes" said Pirwa "I understand, *memsahib* but perhaps it would be better if I made a note of it, if you will please repeat the recipe again to me slowly enough for me to record it." With a great show of wisdom he pulled out a little pencil and a very dirty piece of paper from his

pocket and prepared to write. Slowly my wife repeated the recipe and Pirwa, with his head buried in the paper, wrote with determined effort.

At dinner that night the Bakewell Pudding was uneatable. There were actually whole pepper corns in it and Pirwa was called up for an explanation. "I even took the trouble of giving you the recipe and yet you've spoilt the pudding" said my wife reprovingly. "The idea of your putting pepper-corns into it!"

Pirwa looked most repentant and kept gazing at the paper on which he had recorded the recipe. "Read it again" said my wife, "did I ever say a word about pepper-corns?"

"I have made a great mistake, memsahib" he almost wailed. "Please forgive me. I mistook raisins for pepper. I am so sorry. How can I make amends?" "But surely, *Khansama*, you have different words in Hindustani for raisins and pepper. There's no excuse whatever. What word did you write?" "I wrote no word, memsahib; you see on this note of mine I made a figure like raisins and when I was reading it, the light in the cook-room being dim, I took it to represent a pepper corn."

It was then we realised that his writing was a series of hieroglyphics. Pirwa was illiterate, and he was almost in tears. So we forgave him. With careful tuition in the culinary art he improved. "Today" said my wife to him "we shall have four guests to lunch. Now mind you make no mistakes and I want the pie made especially nice."

Pirwa promised that he would turn out a first class meal. We did not know what was working in his mind, but it was obvious he

was going to make a supreme effort. Our guests arrived and lunch was announced. The soup and the fish were both successful and the pie arrived.



I caught a glimpse of Pirwa at the pantry-door, his eyes fixed on my wife in anxious expectation of a look of approbation. On the pie was written "Mrs. L. H. Niblett Not-at-Home." Later we found my wife's Not-at-Home box in the cookroom. Pirwa had achieved his *magnum opus*.

It was some time after this that one day I got a slip from my wife (I was in Court) in which she said "I wish you could come home and deal with the cook. He has been very insolent." In the evening, on my return home, before I met my wife I sent for Pirwa, frankly astonished that he above all the servants in the establishment should have been cheeky. He appeared in his usual humble way and I had to make a real effort to be angry with him.

"You rascal" I commenced, "You pretend to be so humble before me and yet in my absence you are cheeky to the *memsahib*. I'm going to give you the beating of your life." He recoiled before me and earnestly pleaded, "*Sahib*, if the *memsahib* has said I was insolent she cannot lie. She must be right. I am a 'jungle' and I am ready to cut my tongue off if I said a word to insult her."

I was just on the point of beating him when my wife fortunately appeared and explained that she meant the *dhobi* and not the cook! I apologised to poor innocent Pirwa, whose only comment was that he would himself beat the *dhobi* for his insolence to the *Memsahib*.

During the camping period, Pirwa took the keenest interest in the results of my shikar. He looked on me as some sort of hero if I brought a pheasant back. On one occasion he accompanied me on the march from one camp to the other and I got two pheasants. Pirwa was delighted because I attributed this good fortune to his presence with me.

On the next march he was keen on accompanying me again, but as it was a fairly long trek and I had expected to be delayed on the way having been informed that the intervening forest was teeming with *shikar*, I ordered Pirwa to go on ahead.

It was a most disappointing venture. Places which were reputed for game, places which my *shikari* said he had seen packed with *sambhur* and *searao* and *ghural* were absolutely deserted. The *shikari* was dumb-founded and I was definitely annoyed at having been so deceived.

I arrived at my new camp. Pirwa ran out expectantly to meet me. With a salaam he asked eagerly "Is all the *shikar* you have shot coming later on, *Sahib*?" He almost fell down when I informed him I had seen nothing to shoot.

"Oh, *Sahib*," he said with increasing excitement "I saw herds of animals and I was only a short distance in front of you. In fact, I rolled boulders down the hill all the way to make them run towards you." Then I understood. On future marches Pirwa did not precede me.

Pirwa, like many other hill-servants, is now hibernating in his little village home in Almora district. He will return to Naini Tal

in search of employment next season with the additional "sartifitak", "Pirwa Khansamah has served me for six months. He is keen on cooking and *shikar*. He has been less successful with the latter than the former."

III. Sudnee Ayah.

FEW people born in India do not remember their Ayahs. I remember mine. She was the kindest and most patient woman who ever lived. Deliberate rascality on my part used to meet with coaxing instead of richly deserved punishment. We may abuse the Ayah as much as we like, but she is very precious to her charges. She takes a place next only to "Mother" in the heart of a child and in many cases where a mother is not as attentive as she should be, the Ayah receives the paramount position.

Ayahs are often blamed for dirtiness, for teaching children bad habits, for winking at the Bearer, or for chewing betel-nut on the sly, but the child is not perturbed by any of these considerations. To him or her the Ayah is an unsurpassable being, possessed of every quality that makes her precious to the child. She is the talebearer of the domestic establishment for has she not the ear of the memsahib? The rest of the domestics treat her with profound respect and call her "Ayahji" which is tantamount to "Her ladyship the Ayah."

I remember seeing my old Ayah a few years ago. She was 80 hoary years of age and it touched me to the core to see the dear little old woman with blinded eyes stretch out her arms towards me addressing me as "*Beta*" ("Son"). She placed her knuckles gently against my temples and went through a kneading sort of action whispering prayers and blessings as she did so.

It was later that I learnt that this action signified a prayer that all my sins should be taken away from me and transferred to her. Could any gesture be sweeter?]

SHE is my earliest memory,
 When nine-and-thirty years ago,
 I nestled, in her arms—and oh!
 The wondrous childish ecstasy.

Well do I remember thee,
 O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji!

When I, in search of sympathy,
 Turned sorrowful towards her gaze
 She dried my eyes of tearful haze
 And made me laugh again in glee.

Well do I remember thee,
 O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji?

She'd spur me on to fancy free
 With fairy tales she told
 Of wicked gnomes and Rajas bold,
 With wonderment and rhapsody.

Well do I remember thee
 O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji!

She taught me youth's vocabulary,
 The earliest lisping words I spoke,
 She'd call me "goot" when I awoke,
 And a "nartee" when I'd naughty be.

Well do I remember thee
 O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji!

She'd tire herself with mimicry :
She'd imitate the cows and goats :
She'd croon to me in jangled notes
Which to my ear was harmony.

Well do I remember thee
O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji!

A second mother she to me :
She'd gather all my toys around,
And make my heart within me bound,
In the joyous days of infancy.

Of thee can I forgetful be?
O Ayah Ji! My Ayah Ji!



PAHARI TALES

I. The Fable of the Goat and the Tiger.

WHILE the hills abound in apophthegm and epigram there is no less a hoard of fables which carry with them their own moral. Here is one which reveals the extent to which the goat is believed to have both presence of mind and wisdom.

Grazing on a steep hill-side an old goat was suddenly faced by a tiger. For a moment the goat was struck dumb, while the tiger waved his tail from side to side and crouched as he prepared to spring on his victim.

Suddenly the goat found his voice and in a most nonchalant manner bleated out "Ha! Ha! Mr. Tiger! So I have found you at last. All my life I have longed to taste tiger's blood and, at last, my wish has been granted!"

The tiger drew himself up, winced, and was so taken aback, so overwhelmed with fear, that he suddenly turned round and bounded away. On and on he went, shaking with terror as the thought gripped his heart that perhaps this goat was a tiger-cater.

When he had gone over the crest of the hill, still bounding along, he passed a jackal. "Hi!" cried the jackal "where are you off to in such a hurry, King of the Forest?" "Run! Run!" replied the tiger. "There is a goat down below who threatened to kill me and what are you in comparison to me?"

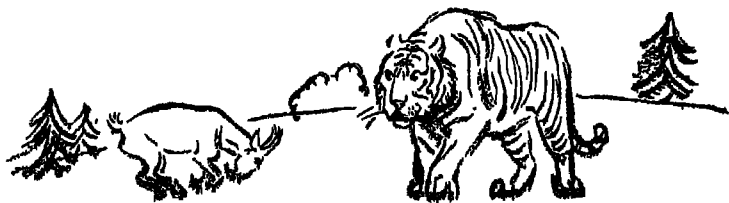
"Wait ! Wait !" replied the jackal. "Do compose yourself, do be sensible, Your Majesty ; the goat has hoaxed you completely." The tiger paused in his flight and breathlessly turned to the jackal, saying "You cunning rogue ! Who would ever trust a jackal ? Your assurance is nothing to me. That goat could never have dared to speak to me like that unless he was capable of overpowering me."

"Your Majesty !" replied the jackal. "I know I am distrusted but, believe me, the goat is much more cunning than I am." "Are you trying to lead me into a trap ?" replied the tiger, with a tremendous roar of anger, which rang through the forest.

The jackal was consumed with fear, and crouching low. on the ground replied, "Oh ! if you distrust me, Your Majesty, let me prove my genuineness by offering to tie my paw to yours as we approach this lying goat."

The tiger thought for a moment and then agreed. With wisps of grass and tender twigs the tiger tied his fore-paw to that of the jackal. Thus bound together, back they went to the place where the goat had met the tiger, and as they went the tiger's fear and distrust grew.

The jackal tried to re-assure him but to no purpose. Then they saw the goat in the distance moving about in the dense jungle. The goat heard the noise of their approach, and on seeing the jackal coming with the tiger, he knew that this crafty animal had put the tiger wise. He was petrified with fear and knew that flight would be of no avail. But suddenly a thought struck him and he spoke.



"Ha ! Ha ! Mr. Jackal" he said, "You are really a wonderful servant ! Fancy, it was only last night I asked you to bring me a tiger and here you have brought one, bound to your self too so that he cannot get away. Well done !"

As he spoke the tiger's eyes almost fell out of his head; he turned angrily on the jackal and would surely have killed him on the spot, except that the goat was approaching him with every word.

Caught up in a whirlwind of fear, the tiger turned and ran for dear life. The jackal being bound to him was dragged along, rolling and tumbling and shrieking as he went. Up to the top of the hill they reached, entangled together, and from there the tiger leapt in frenzied fear down towards the valley. Tripping over the jackal, both fell down the precipice before them and were killed.

Hence is the goat regarded as a much more cunning animal than the jackal, and thus is courage and presence of mind enthroned.

II. The Cat, the Birds, the Mice and the Fox.

A CAT stole into a village home and thrust her head into an earthen pot containing *ghee*. She ate her fill and, of course, the pot became considerably lighter in weight. Consequently when the cat tried to draw her head out again she could not do so. She swung round and skipped and jumped about till the pot struck up against the threshold of the door and was smashed into a hundred fragments. But the neck of the pot still encircled the cat's neck and she could not get rid of it, much as she tried. This so hindered her movements that she soon found that she could not catch any prey so long as she wore this unwanted necklace.

In desperation she thought out a plan to obtain food by a clever stratagem. She said to the birds and the mice "O friends, I have realised the sin of having taken the lives of so many of your dear kind and to obtain forgiveness and mercy from God I have put on this necklace vowing never again to kill or eat any animals or birds. I propose now to go to Hardwar and there to wash away my sins in the Ganges."

Saying this she proceeded to bite at roots of trees and nibble at leaves. At first the mice and the birds were dubious whether to believe her or not, but when they saw her actually eating of roots and leaves their suspicions were allayed. The idea of going

to bathe in the Ganges attracted the mice and the birds who were all pious-minded and they suggested they should accompany the cat to Hardwar.



This was just what the cat wanted, and she at once seized the opportunity and offered to protect them along the way against the attacks of other cats. So next morning they proceeded on their pilgrimage, stopping at night in a cave at the foot of the hills.

With set design the cat got into the innermost corner of the cave saying to the birds and the mice "I'm very tired and want a safe place to sleep in so I shall take this place. but you can stay at the mouth of the cave; should any tigers or leopards come this way you can escape at once." The mice and the birds immediately protested and said "But this is not fair. You promised to protect us and now you are giving us the most unsafe place. You should stay at the mouth of the cave."

This was exactly what the cat wanted, but she pretended not to appreciate the suggestion and said in a grudging manner. "Very well, as you so desire, I shall sleep at the entrance and you can stay further in." Now, the cat was very hungry having been without food for nearly a week. At the dead of night she snapped up the bird which was nearest her and swallowed it whole. Then she did the same with a mouse and so on.



By morning her appetite was thoroughly satisfied and she fell into a sound sleep. When dawn broke, the mice and the birds awoke to find their number greatly reduced. They rushed to the cat, saying in alarm "How have you kept guard? Some of our

company is missing." The cat pretended to be thoroughly disgusted and said 'I knew that some of you were too afraid to stand this camping in a cave and would run home through fear. I saw some of you running away last night, but I did not prevent you for fear of incurring your displeasure.'

The next day the same thing happened and the mice and the birds became suspicious. Some of the birds were sitting up on tree during the day when a fox passed that way and they mentioned these strange happenings to him. He laughed and told them they were very foolish and were being deceived. He offered to come over to their cave at sun-down and prove to them that the cat was not living on roots but devouring their companions at night.

That evening the fox came to their cave and all the birds and mice sat around expectantly. The cat did not know that there was any prearranged plan. She rather resented the call of the fox. Immediately on arrival the fox said "Hullo, Madam Cat, what a lovely necklace you have on." And he burst out laughing hoping the cat would do the same. But the cat was insulted at these remarks which were calculated to ridicule her, and she only gnashed her teeth. Then said the fox "So you are acting as guard to these mice and birds on their pilgrimage to Hardwar."

Now the cat became suspicious of the fox and thought that if she showed any more temper with him he might put wise the birds and the mice, so she forced herself to smile.

Once again the fox said to her, "Madam Cat, fancy you living on roots and leaves. Ha! Ha! Ha-a-a-a!" The cat tried to humour the fox and joined the fox in his laugh, opening her mouth

expansively and guffawing loudly. As she did this there could be seen between her teeth the end of a rat's tail and, stuck to her palate, a feather of a bird. Instantly the mice and birds fled. The fox followed and devoured all of them before they could reach their homes.



III—Friend of Man.

WHILE the fox is represented as outwitting other animals by means of his innate cunning, he is also regarded in the hills as a friend of man. A delightfully *naïve* story prevails which illustrates this attitude of the fox. It is this.

Once a leopard was caught in a trap which had been laid for him in the jungle. A Pandita, or holy man, was passing that way and the leopard entreatingly asked to be set free. "No! No!" said the Pandita "If I did such a foolish thing you would kill and eat me no sooner you were free."

"On my honour" promised the leopard "I will not do that." After many importunate requests the Pandita was prevailed upon to release the leopard; but no sooner had he done so, the animal leapt on him to devour him.

The Pandita begged the leopard to keep his promise, but the leopard replied, "You may have had mercy on me this time but mankind generally tries to destroy tigers and leopards and they should be treated in the same way." The Pandita tried to be calm in spite of his fears, and argued "If you are right and mankind deserves to be devoured by animals of your kind, then let us put your views to the test and have arbitrators to decide the question."

"Very well" agreed the leopard releasing the man. "Who shall we have as arbitrators?" Now the Pandita at once thought of the cow, who, apart from being sacred, was so often the victim of leopards. As a good Brahmin he also thought the Ganges would be favourable to him. So he suggested the cow and the Ganges as arbitrators.

The leopard knew the Ganges would be just, but he was doubtful about the cow, so he suggested that a snake, which was man's natural enemy, should be added to the arbitrators. Not

to be outdone the Brahmin, feeling that the fox, with all his cunning was a friend of man, suggested that he too should be added to this list of arbitrators.

The leopard thinking that as between an animal and a man the fox was sure to favour the former, being an animal himself, agreed to this addition.

So the cow, the Ganges, the snake, and the fox all met in thoughtful conclave to decide the issue. The cow spoke first and to the horror of the Pandita, said "Man should certainly meet with death at the hands of a leopard because he keeps cows, drinks their milk, takes their labour, and yet starves and beats them till they die. The leopard at least kills them at once and does not put them to slow torture."

Now it was the turn of the Ganges. She gave her dictum solemnly. "Man" she said "is a hypocrite who cleanses himself in my purifying waters and then goes away and immediately fouls himself with Sin again. The leopard at least does not pretend to seek cleansing and so does not offend so much against me. The Pandita should die."

The poor Pandita was distraught with anxiety. Two of the four arbitrators had already gone against him, and he had no hope whatever of gaining a favourable decision from the snake.



Then the snake confirmed these fears by saying "Man certainly deserves to be killed. He provokes snakes and then kills them. The leopard does not interfere with snakes at all." No sooner was this decision given, the leopard pounced on the man and was on the point of killing him, saying as he proceeded, "That's enough! Of the four arbitrators three have decided against you, and so it is unnecessary to wait for the decision of the fourth."

But the fox quickly shrieked "Wait, wait, I must have an opportunity of discussing their decisions with my fellow arbitrators and, after that, if they maintain their conclusions, well and good."

The leopard restrained himself and let the Pandita go. "Now" said the fox "dear fellow-arbitrators, each of you have been guided by personal considerations. Let us study the facts of this case in particular and see who is right." He then asked the leopard to explain exactly what had happened. The leopard proceeded to detail the facts; but the fox pretended he could not understand him.

Again the leopard tried to explain the position, but the fox was impervious and said "My brain is a very small one compared to yours, and the only way I can understand the problem thoroughly is for you to show exactly how matters stood in actual practice."

The leopard thereupon got into the trap again and said "This is how I was situated and the Pandita came along and I asked him to release me. Now if you will open the trap I will show you where the Pandita was when he first addressed me."

The leopard was still speaking from within the trap when the fox gave the hint to the Pandita who along with him, sped away leaving the leopard a prisoner as before.

NAINI TAL

NAINI TAL, that from the hill-tops, overlooks a placid lake,
Graceful yachts and Indian *kishkis* riding on a furrowed wake.

Noddingly the weeping willows overhang the water's edge,
Casting shadows on the roadside bordered by the waving sedge.

Down the *bajri*-surfaced roadway passes by the jocund crowd,
Hoary age and happy children, free of care and laughing loud.

Gaily-dressed Pahari ladies, puttoo-suited gentlemen,
Europeans in height of fashion, khaki uniforms, and then—

Dashing horsemen by the hill-side, rickshaw coolies running fast,
Polo ponies led by syces, dandies softly gliding past.

Filing by the school processions now of girls and then of boys;
Ayaks, in abundance, wheeling little children with their toys.

These the scenes, in wild confection of a season in the hills,
Health and vigour thus accruing and a host of heavy bills!

In the air a noise of cheering, on the Flats a hockey match;
Wafted up the strains of music which the evening breezes catch;

From the Naini Devi temple comes a tolling of the bells,
Now the "Angelus" is ringing from the quiet cloistered cells.

Winter comes, and then a bustle, motor-horns in plenty blow,
Laden with their human freightage, motor-cars and buses go.

Ever plains-ward they are heading, back to loved ones far and near,
O! the joy of these reunions at the end of every year.

Comes December, crisp and chilly; Naini Tal a-sleeping lies,
Undisturbed its peaceful waters—lonely roads and winter skies.

Shuttered all the doors and windows of the lovely bungalows,
Teeming once with living inmates, now in undisturbed repose.

Bleakly January reopens: thunder, rain, and hail, and sleet,
Noiselessly then Nature places on the hills her winding-sheet.

Dazzling in the morning sunlight whitely lies the melting snow,
Nestling snugly on its bosom, holly bright and mistletoe.

Frozen now the mountain streamlets, stretching down in silv'ry line;
Redly splashed the far horizon as with darkly-coloured wine.

Sparkling icicles are hanging from the fir-trees where they stand,
Surely Father Christmas hovers somewhere in this fairyland !

Once again the clouds are lifting, once again the willows bloom,
Once again the spinning's started on the season's human loom;

Once again the crash of traffic thunders up the Naini way,
And the "night" of Naini's silence is converted into "day."

THE SHAH SAHIB

An Indian Village Mystery.

IT WAS in January, 1927, that into the quiet Indian countryside there walked, with steady and solemn tread, a Mohammedan mendicant—a Shah Sahib.

He was dressed in a long flowing green robe that matched the burnt sienna of the dusty road and the emerald hue of the fields that stretched out on every side. His eyes were a rich hazel in colour and extraordinarily mild, while now and again a peculiarly juvenile twinkle seemed to play over them. His beard was grizzled and spoke of fifty summers or more, but his face was singularly free of wrinkles and there was a ruddy glow under the light brown of his cheeks. Altogether, he looked a picturesque sight as he walked steadily on and on with swinging motion and easy gait through the fields and the *dhak* jungle and past little hamlets snugly ensconced in groves of leafy mango and *pipal* trees. And, every now and then, his eyes looked upwards seemingly for spiritual guidance as he hummed a religious refrain.

It was thus that he entered the village of Ara Kalan in the Allahabad district. The dust of the road had settled on his clothes and beard and added rather than detracted from the picturesque appearance he presented.

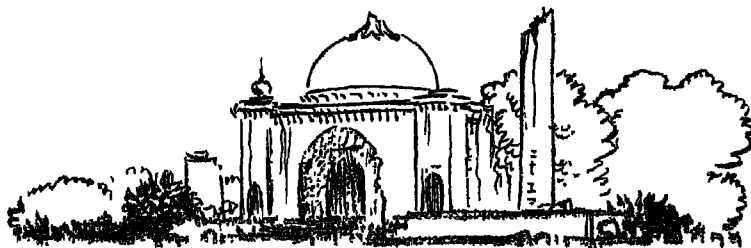
Here, at Ara Kalan, over the tops of the little thatched huts and humble homes of the peasants, he could see, towering upwards, the minaret of a ruined mosque. Thither he wended his way.

Better to rest in a ruined house of Allah than in a palace meant for human residence ! Hot and weary he arrived and then, made his way to the ruined well to wash his feet and prepare to say his evening prayer.

The sun was already sinking on the western horizon, and in another ten minutes the time was to arrive when the faithful follower would cry out his evening *azan* and lament before God for the sins of the day.

A village girl at the well had just finished drawing her pitcher of water for the evening meal, and as she prepared to go, the venerable Shah Sahib arrived. She drew her cloth across her delicate features no sooner was she aware of the presence of the saintly Shah Sahib. Though only a girl of sixteen, she was a widow who was married in childhood and had actually never set eyes on her husband, thus even in the presence of a reverend personality like the Shah Sahib she felt embarrassed.

"Daughter !" said the old man "Give me some of the water you have drawn. I have no rope to draw with." Immediately, the water was supplied in the Shah Sahib's vessel and Qutubunnisa Bibi hurried away to her home where she lived with her old father-in-law Nadir, a *jolaha* (or weaver) by caste.



"Father" she said as she arrived out of breath, "there is a *Fakir* at the mosque and he asked me to give him some water which I did. He must have no food either. Shall I cook some and will you present it to him in the name of Allah?"

"Let me go and see him" said Nadir, and away he went to the mosque, but before he reached, he could hear the Shah Sahib's voice plaintively crying out the evening *azan* calling the Faithful to prayer.

For years the *azan* had ceased to be called in distant Ara Kalan, the mosque had been allowed to go into ruins, spirituality had waned and now, as the evening air rang with that soulful and melodious refrain, the followers of Islam, heart-stricken and touched, hurried to the spot to see whose voice it was that had filled all their souls with fervent joy and spiritual appeal.

There, they saw the saintly, *Imam*, standing humbly before his Maker crying out his heart. Slowly and reverently, they moved up to Nadir, who had arrived before them, and the gathered company stood themselves silently behind the Shah Sahib, who ceased his crying and proceeded to pray in silence, groaning deeply now and again in an agony of spiritual supplication. Sometimes he would kneel, sometimes he would stand and at other times he would prostrate himself on the cold, bare ground as his spirit wrestled in prayer.

The village Moslems who stood behind him emulated his every movement and their souls were filled with a spiritual calm and with gladness. And then the prayer was over. The old Shah Sahib turned and faced them without the least surprise. "O, followers of the True Faith!" he said, "Fie for shame! To think that you have so far ceased to fear God or to regard His holy

commandments that you have ceased to pray, that you have allowed this house of prayer, this mosque, to go into ruins. But it is not too late. I come as a messenger from God to tell you that this mosque will be replaced by one which will come down upon it from heaven, as the bird comes down from the sky and rests upon a branch. Only have faith. Do as I tell you, and continue to pray, also play incessantly on a tom-tom day and night and collect alms for the poor. I shall stay here within these sacred precincts for a day and then I shall move into one of your houses which must be vacated for me. The house must be emptied of all earthly goods and the door must be locked. In no circumstances, must that lock be opened for thirty days within which time, if it be God's will, a heavenly mosque will come down upon the site of this ruin you have here. Go now and leave me to agonise in prayer for the day of the fulfilment of this promise which God has whispered in my heart."

Mystified, amazed and filled with religious zeal and fervent prayerfulness, the gathered company bowed deeply to this prophet of God and departed unto their homes. Then, Nadir returned and asked the Shah Sahib to take his evening meal at his place and return after it to the mosque.

Qutubunnisa *Bibi* had worked hard and by the time her father and the Shah Sahib arrived, she was ready with a dinner as rich as their poor circumstances would permit. She served it herself and the Shah Sahib, tired after his long journey, and hungry after his long fast through the day, ate heartily of the repast and retired to the mosque.

Next day, the Shah Sahib returned to Nadir's house and the news of his prophecy having reached far and wide, a great crowd of Hindus and Mohammedan gathered to see him. He addressed

them all, repeating what he had said before and asking the Hindus also not to be distrustful but to believe in the event to come.

Having finished his sermon, he pointed ominously to the door of the house next to Nadir's saying, "Into that room now, I shall go and serve my self-immolation. Have it cleared of all it contains. There must be nothing worldly to withdraw my attention from things eternal. The room must be absolutely bare."

"But what about your food Shah Sahib?" asked Nadir anxiously "May we make a trap-door and slip food into you each day?" "Alas," said the Shah Sahib "do you think I care about food when I am receiving heavenly succour? I shall ascend within that room and like a spirit, rise out of it. When next you see me, you will notice me standing at the threshold of the new mosque, coming down from heaven."

The house ordered to be vacated, belonged to Ahsan. He felt privileged at the selection and hastily cleared the room. Qutubunnisa Bibi, who was watching from the door with awe-filled eyes, was touched to the depths, and gathering up a little straw, threw it into the house in case the Shah Sahib wanted something more than the bare ground for a bed.

And now, the moment of the highest thrill had arrived. The Shah Sahib stepped firmly towards the door, his head bent low. As he entered, he turned to Nadir and said "You, I appoint an earthly representative of mine in my absence. You are to sit by the tom-tom day and night and see that it is played incessantly. Each day at sundown, you are to say a prayer and send the money collected into your house to your daughter-in-law, who will guard the money as her very life. It will bring a curse on any one who dares steal that money, for it is God's."

And then, the doors were closed on the Shah Sahib.

Day and night the tom-toms played their steady staccato tune and people from all the neighbouring villages gathered. Alms, from both Hindus and Mohammedans, poured in. Each day, the collection became larger. Those who did not have money to give, offered their jewels. And each evening, the faithful Nadir said his prayer and deposited the collection with Qutubunnisa *Bibi*. The sum became so large that a look of fear came into the eyes of pretty little Qutubunnisa *Bibi* as she was seen carrying away the amount.

But there was one sceptic amongst the people. He was the village *Zamindar*, a *Thakur*. He was extremely annoyed at the continual noise of the drumming which made sleep impossible and life unbearable. Apart from this, sometimes in his more credulous moments, bigotry got hold of him and it struck him that if a mosque did come down from heaven, it would be an advantage to Mohammedans only and the Hindus who were subscribing their all would either be unable to use this place of worship or be converted to Islam.

After three weeks, the music still continued to play and no voice could be heard within the locked door through which the Shah Sahib had passed. The irate *Zamindar* appealed to the authorities about it.

The *Tahsildar* Magistrate tried to persuade the people to cease the playing of music, but to no effect. Their religious zeal had attained a pitch of fanaticism, and interference meant trouble. So, the *Zamindar* was asked to let the period of thirty days pass.

The thirtieth day arrived and the whole countryside gathered from far and wide to witness the great miracle. Day passed and night came. Through the freezing atmosphere, the expectant crowd sat by little camp-fires waiting with their eyes fixed on the

mosque. Midnight and morning came and Nadir was looked upon with suspicion. The people commenced to ask for a return of their money. They demanded that the house of the Shah Sahib's incarceration be opened. Nadir begged that this should be done before the authorities and he suggested that they may have misunderstood the number of days mentioned by the Shah Sahib.

Within a few hours, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate with the Station Officer of Police and a party of constables arrived. The key was asked for, but Nadir said he had lost it. The lock was broken open and the doors thrown apart.

There lay the cold bare room, empty save for the few wisps of straw that Qutubunnisa *Bibi* had thrown in before the Shah Sahib had entered. Someone trod on the straw which lay in the corner, and down sank his foot. The straw was removed and revealed a hole going down at a slant. On being excavated just a little, the mystery was solved, at least partially. The hole led into the house of Nadir.

Qutubunnisa had the key of Nadir's house but Qutubunnisa could not be found and has not been found to this day; nor has the Shah Sahib; nor the money.

Nadir was in tears; but obviously he was not in a position to enlighten anyone. He had followed the Shah Sahib's commands strictly and made over the money to Qutubunnisa *Bibi*, never leaving his post to come inside his house.

The Mosque from heaven has not yet descended. Perhaps it will, when the Shah Sahib and Qutubunnisa *Bibi* return !

[This story is based on fact, and it is not meant to imply that the person styling himself a "Shah Sahib" was, in fact, one, or for the matter of that, a Mohammedan.]

A VISIT TO THE *DARGAH* OF SAIYAD SALAR MASAUD AT BAHRAICH

IT WAS in the sacred month of Ramzan,
Sacred to every true Musalman,
That I ventured out to this shrine to go
When the *loo* of the day had ceased to blow,
As the calm of a summer's evening fell
On the silent tomb with a soulful spell,
While the golden spire beat back its gold
To the setting sun o'er the distant wold,
And the silver'd dome caught the dazzling light
And changed its hue to a reddening white,
While the crystal glint of the minarets
Gleamed out in the sky like flaming jets.

It is the tomb of Salar Masaud,
The resting place of his bier and his shroud,
And here to his mausoleum's side
Come crowds that gather from far and wide.
Moslem and Hindu in long pilgrimage,
The flippant, the fervent, the seer, and the sage.
With padded footsteps I softly tread
The smooth marbled surface that lay ahead
On every side stood the fretted walls
Of the cool and carved marble halls.
Here, the tomb of the Saiyad Masaud
Of regal birth, from the Kings of Oudh,

O'er the grave was spread a gold-edged pall
 While fragrant roses were strewn o'er all.
 Nearby to the martyr's buried corse
 Lay buried his standard, his dog and horse.
 Not these alone, for near him is laid
 Fair Zohra Bibi, the devotee maid
 Who sought this sanctum in centuries past ;
 On its curative power her trust she cast ;
 Here her blinded eyes received their sight,
 Here she stayed till her gladden'd soul took flight
 And clung to the soul of the sainted scer
 In the realm of the spirit, unseen, somewhere !

And yearly the crowds that here repair
 Marry this saint to this damsel fair ;
 When with reverent hands this tomb is laved,
 With hands which perfected love has enslaved,
 The water that flows off its sloping sides
 Drifts out to a pool and there abides
 For the sick and the lame, the halt and the blind
 To immerse themselves and remedy find
 For their palsied limbs and torturing pain.
 Bethesda's power revealed again !
 It is the sanctum of Salar Masaud
 A martyred saint and a Musalman proud.



Here rests his body and excalibur
 He died in the faith, *Allah-ho-Akbar* !
 As silent I went, so silent I go
 With thoughts uplifted and head bent low
 At the gateway there kneels deep sunk in prayer,
 A lonely *khadim*, with stony stare
 There, clad in pure white, his soul uplifts
 As, nearer to God it gently drifts.
 Long may the tomb of Salar Masaud
 Preserve the sweet calm with which it's endowed.
 The peace of the shrine shed rest on my soul,
 As I wished it adieu and homewards I stole.

[N.B.—Near this *Dargah* is a fathomless pool called Anarkali and the local legend is that, in the long ago, a golden boat used to rise up from that pool. The boat contained gilded plates bearing food for the poor. One day, a poverty-stricken person after partaking of his meal, stole the empty plate. From that time the boat never emerged again and it is believed that it still rests at the bottom of this unfathomable pool. It is further alleged that some people, within living memory, have seen—or imagined they have seen—on moonlit nights, a phantom boat riding along the smooth surface of the pool.]

GAPPU :

THE 'ROBIN HOOD' OF MUSSOORIE

THIRTY years ago before Her Majesty the Queen had graced Mussoorie with her presence and when the proud title of 'Queen of Hill Stations' had not been acquired by this popular summer resort, a rustic simplicity pervaded these quiet hills and criminality was practically non-existent. Suddenly into these calm and undisturbed surroundings there leapt into prominence a house-breaker who, by his wiles and artful burglaries, staggered the public sense of security and baffled both the District Police and the Criminal Investigation Department.

Burglary followed burglary in rapid succession till a Major's wife lost a locket containing the hair of an only child who had been dead many years. In her statement to the Police she wept at the loss of so precious a relic and mentioned that she cared not about any of the remaining property stolen, which in value ran into some hundreds of rupees, but that she would pay a handsome reward to the person who found the locket containing her dead child's hair.

A large crowd of innocent-eyed coolies (known as *Phaltu's* or 'Extras') was standing at a respectable distance off and watching the austere Sub-Inspector as he recorded the statement. The tears of the Major's wife could be seen from where they stood. They were visibly moved: one more than the rest of them. When the Sub-Inspector turned and said in Hindustani, "See what a

heartless brute this burglar was to have taken the memsahib's dead child's hair which was no good to him in any case," the young coolie who seemed more affected than the rest boldly left his ragged company and stepped forward. There was a look of agonised compassion on his face as he said, "Memsahib, I am the thief. To think that I should by my act have caused you a sorrow so great is more than I can stand. Let the Police arrest me and I shall take them to the spot where I placed the locket "

The Major's wife was struck dumb with astonishment and the Sub-Inspector stood gaping vacantly at this audacious young man who had the boldness to make this open confession. It was Gappu-the notorious Gappu-and at long last he had come within the grasp of the law.

Even while all around stood inactively watching him, Gappu's expression altered and as if to cheer the sorrowful Memsahib, he added, " But please promise that you will tell the Major Sahib not to keep blue-black ink in beer-bottles in future. It was here I suffered the greatest disappointment of my exploits by impatiently taking a big gulp of what I supposed to be beer but discovered to be ink."

As Gappu reached the end of this oration he received a hearty smack from the Sub-Inspector for his insolence and was duly handcuffed.

True to his promise, Gappu led the Police far out into a secluded valley and there by the side of a sparkling stream, under a boulder which Gappu recognised and removed, lay the locket.

The Major's wife was delighted and wished to reward him, but he replied that he deserved punishment, and not a reward for having caused her so much pain.

With characteristic frankness, Gappu confessed to a long series of burglaries and in every case restored the property. Stolen cash and liquor were the only two items not recovered! He mentioned how on one occasion, the inemsahib of the house awoke and called out "Who's that?" he replied "Its me, but I wont be long." On ano'her occasion, he mentioned how he found signs of such dire poverty in the house, that he came away without anything as he did not want to increase the distress of the owner of the few things he could have taken.

I was only a boy then, but I can remember how, presuming on the fact that my father was the Magistrate of Mussoorie, I visited the under-trial lock-up daily and gazed on Gappu as some sort of hero. Even now I can remember how he enthralled me with stories of his adventures and exploits and thrilling escapes, how almost with pride and boyish enthusiasm, he described his *modus operandi* and how he laughed at the humour of it all. And I can remember the morning I arrived there to find in the cell, not Gappu but the sentry who had been on guard-duty the morning before.

As Gappu had held my imagination and conversed with me long and volubly, he had been busy quietly and steadily filing the prison-bars under cover of his blanket. The unfortunate constable on duty at 3 a.m. that morning suddenly discovered that Gappu had escaped. He had merely slipped down to the Mall below and held on to the rickshaw of a *sahib* returning late from a dance. That *sahib* paid him his wages along with the other coolies and Gappu armed with eight whole annas proceeded to wards the Nepal border.

He knew the border well and he also knew that laws of extradition existed. Having crossed over only by a few yards, he sat down and waited calmly for his pursuers. As he expected, the

Police followed up the next day hoping to intercept him on his way and guessing that this would naturally be Gappu's next move. When they were a hundred yards away from him, Gappu drew their attention with a loud laugh, remarking "You Police do move slowly. You've delayed me on my journey by a whole day. I just wanted to point out this boundary pillar to you. Now run back and get an extradition warrant. I am sorry to give you all this trouble, but the law must be respected. Dont be long because it is very cold here and I want to get back to British India."

The chagrined Police returned crest-fallen and Gappu departed to the bleak hills of Nepal.

A reward of Rs. 300/- was offered for any information leading to his arrest and all were wide awake waiting for his return on a burglarious raid in British India.

One day my father's orderly announced to him in court that a Sub-Inspector of Police from an Indian State had asked for an interview to find out whether he would qualify for the reward if he gave information leading to Gappu's arrest. My father was sceptical that a State Policeman would serve any useful purpose, but thought it would do no harm to see what could come of the offer. So he called the Sub Inspector in and gave him a chair on the dais next to him. The court Ahlmed saluted. Instead of wearing uniform the man was in an English-cut suit and had a gold tie-pin to his collar and gold cuff-links on his shirt. He looked far too well-to-do to be a Sub Inspector of those days.

A smile played on his handsome face as he said "You dont seem to have recognised me yet. I'm Gappu and hearing there is a reward of Rs. 300 for my arrest I did not see why anybody should profit by it but myself. Do I qualify for it ? "

Even as he spoke he stood up and folded his hands. When he had finished he went down at my father's feet and begged forgiveness for this practical joke.

My father was stupefied with the unexpectedness of it all and called to the orderlies at the door to shut it and secure the criminal. Gappu made no attempt to escape but assured my father that there was no cause for alarm. He himself requested that my father should record his further confession with regard to the last burglary he had committed which he said had been forced on him by the necessity of providing himself with the outfit required for this practical joke.

As my father had thus automatically become a witness against Gappu, the cases against him had to go to another Magistrate who was severe in judgement and sentenced Gappu to a cumulative term of ten years' rigorous imprisonment.

For the first time, Gappu's spirit broke down when he heard the sentence pronounced. He wept, and with quavering voice, he said to the Magistrate, " Pardon my insolence, Sir, but I thought the Britisher had a better sense of humour than to regard my offences so seriously."

Gappu, I am told, died in jail a few years after. Accustomed to the free air of the hills and the liberty of movement which only the forest can give, he must have languished and pined away within the close and limited sphere in which he was destined to move during that long period of incarceration.

Thus passed the most lovable blackguard that Mussoorie has ever known.

KAMALA :

THE IDEAL HINDU WIFE.

THE Indian love-ideal of Laila, the idol of Majnum, is almost surpassed by the conception of Kamala. In the former we have a damsel of surpassing loveliness attracting her wooers by sheer force of her beauty. In the latter we have a devoted wife who is consumed by the madness of love for her husband—the one and only man who occupies the whole of her mental and spiritual horizon.

We have no description of Kamala, but we are left to glean her character from her wonderful, whole-souled, passionate "letters to her husband," Krishna.

She sits in solitary loneliness, "in the sanctity of self-abnegation", pouring out Love's fragrance with her pen in unhesitating freedom of speech. And then the madness of her love begets dreams and in the train of those dreams comes jealousy—imagined and unreasonable—then tragedy. She loses the pen her husband gave her as an emblem of his love, she loses her pet parrot which has been to her a constant companion behind the veil, the lowering clouds of madness gather round her sad life, and realising the deadly grip of that terrible mania as it slowly takes hold of her, she cries out in an agony of soul to her husband: "Do come. Do come, before I am completely gone and it is too late."

Then comes a letter, at last, from her husband, but in a half-hearted strain—a letter towards which she had looked so long and eagerly.

This completes the ruin and in resignation, she writes: "The happy time we spent together—oh ! it was all a delusion, a dream from which I now awake ! I fancied I was your prisoner. You have now set me free and I am at large like my pet. I pray Thee, O God, take me away this instant ! Take me into Thy holy presence, for I am free from all earthly bonds and the task Thou did'st allot to me in this life is done."

Here we have the ideal conception of a Hindu wife's duty. It is entirely towards her husband, her liege and her lord. When he needs her no more, "the task Thou did'st allot to me in this life is done."

Then follows the last heart-rending letter, the final call and the last farewell. Here we have a quaint and beautiful representation of the clasp of death, of a "Messenger,"—"a big strong man with a beard, a beautiful net in his hands which he is unfolding and getting ready for me." As the folds of that 'net' gradually draw round her and she is smothered in their loving embrace, still Krishna is her last thought—more than earth, more than everything else. "Goodbye earth and everything" she cries. "Goodbye Krishna ! I am gone—for ever !"

To the modern materialistic mind, all this looks like the ravings of a lunatic, but that is exactly what it is, though of a lunatic distraught by the power of love. To some it will look like the acute sufferings of a neurotic, but that it is, though of a slave of love—the whole-souled love of a Hindu wife.



It is an ideal of the East and consequently the Westerner must try to look at it with the vision of the East to appreciate it to the full. In the West, the feminine ideal is almost invariably the unfledged maiden; here, the ideal is of devoted wifehood. The idealism of the East then commences where the idealism of the West ends.

Kamala is not the ideal of Rider Haggard. For example, she is not selfish like the heroine of "Mr. Meeson's Will." She is not self-willed like Beatrice.

She is jealous, but she is not jealous like Juno who turned her daughter Io into a heifer because Jupiter fell in love with her. Nor does she evade her lover like Daphne, who transformed into a laurel tree when pursued by Apollo. So the idealism of Mythology does not apply to her.

No heroine of Shakespeare, either, is exactly like her. Shakespeare's ladies are all high-born, displaying delicate honour, rapidity of decision, quickness of sympathy and absolute trust in instinct.

Kamala does not pretend to be all this. She is merely a household ideal—but a very beautiful one at that. She possesses something of the ethereal qualities of Miranda—completely unsophisticated, absolutely simple—compact of the very elements of womanhood, but her character is brought out in stronger relief by the display of a towering jealousy. She possesses something of the character of Rosalind in the sweet vacancy of the forest of Arden, but she is capable of assimilating more of the few worldly observations which lie along her narrow worldly path. She philosophises when she sees a cat and says that, though the omen be bad, she must call the cat a friend for giving her timely warning of her own sin and fate.

Then, again, take her rhyming observation—

“A housewife fair is a husband’s foe,
A husband rich is the housewife’s woe.”

This smacks of the philosophy of Portia, but there is an entire absence of pedantry in her philosophy. She is the direct antithesis of the rude and stubborn Cordelia. Like Ophelia, she goes mad, but the reason for Ophelia’s madness remains a mystery. In the case of Kamala, it is clearly the imagined faithlessness of her husband. Her dreams make her, like Hermia and Helena, the sport of fairies, but unlike Hermia and Helena she does not become a slave to the fairies themselves. She presents the dazzlingly white and saintly figure of Isabella in ‘Measure for Measure,’ but her character is entirely uncompromising with wrong and she could not, like Isabella, plead the cause of guilty love even for a brother. She has the sensitive affection of Desdemona and the proud sincerity of Cordelia, but without the other little foibles present in these characters.

Kamala is a character by herself. Kamala is Love and Love is Kamala. She is a personification of the perfect love and devotion of the perfect wife. It may be argued that her consuming jealousy mars the perfection of her love, but without that strong jealousy the overwhelming devotion she professes would become unreal.

That jealousy is a necessary concomitant of her love. It brings out all the real fire of the character of Kamala until she burns like a flame in the sky of Hindu sentimental thought. Those who have read Kamala’s letters will realise that the general impression that there is no real love behind the veil is utterly false.

THE SONG OF THE DURMUT

THERE'S an instrument, the *durmud*, with which
they beat the roads,
It's a relic of old India and its engineering modes,
It's a simple wooden staff with an iron weight below,
With which they crush the *kunkar*, singing gaily "*Maro ! Ho !*"

Drap ! Drap ! Drap !
A hundred *durmuds* go,
The *kunkar*'s beaten down
With each united blow,
Drap ! Drap ! Drap !
It comes in measured beat,
Like tramp of marching men,
Like myriad marching feet.

A host of ragged coolies in solid phalanx stand
Each wielding his own *durmud*—a mud-bespattered band !
In unison they beat, oh ! how perfect is the time
Of this wild staccato music, of its metre and its rhyme.

Drap ! Drap ! Drap ! etc.

Let old India move along, upon her speeding way,
Let politics advance and her customs pass away,
But there's still an ancient link that binds us to the past,
The manner of the metalling that time has failed to blast.

Drap ! Drap ! Drap ! etc.

Sometimes I think of India, which my early boyhood knew,
Of Lachan and his wife on the cart the camel drew,
And now I see their children in motor-lorries squashed,
Another link is broken, but all is not yet lost.

Drap ! Drap ! Drap ! etc.

I'll be sad the day I see, the roller worked by steam
Displace the ancient *durmuc*, with its horrid engine-scream,
Still I'll listen for the echo of that steady thumping sound,
When I hear it in my fancy, sweetest mem'ries will abound.

Drap ! Drap ! Drap ! etc.



DAK BUNGALOWS OF INDIA

ENSCONCED in the deep shadows of a well-wooded grove, it stands—the Dak Bungalow. In front, the long, long white road which stretches for many hundreds of miles and passes scores of similar retreats.

As the midnight motorist flashes past he gets a glimpse of these time-worn walls looming up out of the darkness of its surroundings. There they stand like silent ghostly sentinels, as they have stood for decades past. In the day, when the rays of the summer's sun are pouring down relentlessly on the thirsty wayfarer, whose eyes are burning with the *loo* and whose throat is caked with hot dust, how attractive this sanctuary of rest looks. How its cool shade and shelter calls the wearied traveller, till instinctively he obeys the behests of that inner calling. All is quiet, save for the crickets which creak with incessant lulling sound in the trees and occasionally the owl in the leafless *pipal* hoots out his mellow mournful song—deep and low, deep and low it comes and it speaks of summer.

We reach the bungalow. All is wrapped in a mantle of silence.

We go round it, and at the back is a small row of servants' quarters. One of the doors is half open and from it comes a steady burbling sound with occasional pauses in between. It is the ancient *Khansama*—bearded and old and bent, drawing lazily at his hobblebobble.

We call. He comes out immediately with salaming obeisance. Back he goes, but only for a minute, and he emerges again with a rusty key at which he blows furiously at intervals, evidently with the intention of cleaning it thereby. He throws the doors of the bungalow open and we enter a musty atmosphere, but pleasant withal.

Every article of furniture is caked with dust, but this does not detract from the appreciation of this veritable oasis in a desert of dust. A bat scrambles out of the hiatus in the ceiling and narrowly misses ricochetting off our heads. On one table lies the Visitors' Book—ragged and yellow and torn. We turn the pages and it is like looking on a scroll of the dead. Names of those long since retired and dead; names of those who had in the year of entry noted their designation as 'Joint Magistrates' and now are High Court Judges and members of the Board of Revenue; names of world tourists who succeeded and those whose efforts ended in disaster.

With what different feelings these visitors must have visited this bungalow. There are those who came here on cold inspection duty, those who hated the loneliness and whose only pleasure was the imaginary tinkle each day of Travelling Allowance dropping into their pockets, five big tinkles and then a smaller one.. The day's T. A. was earned. Little else mattered!

Then there were those who came here for a rest in the countryside. They had eyes to see and ears to hear and they both saw and heard. They saw the gnarled *jamun* tree to the east which had formed the sport of the *chhokra* boy half a century ago and was still the happy hunting ground for the village children to seek and to find fallen fruit.



Then there is the *banian* tree—so shady and cool and inviting. How many a happy honeymooning couple had sat in that shaded bower and whispered words of love and confidence undisturbed by the stare of a scandalising world.

Towards the gate, bordering the rutted road, stands the majestic avenue of *melantolias* with their soft leaves waving in the breeze and their little fluted blossoms, some pink, some lily-white, dancing above in the sunlight or leaving the branch and fluttering down to kiss the brick-red earth below.

To the west, a row of *pipal* trees—some half a century old, others but saplings. How restful must these be to the Hindu eye as he conjures up, in his imagination, the myriad gods which sit upon the leaves on Thursday afternoons. Upon the topmost branch, sits a vulture brooding in silence. Yonder a bamboo clump, its long stalks waving gently in the wayward breeze. A slight rustle of leaves and then again a hush. Under it, in a secluded corner, sits a maniac hermit. He is older than the *Khansama* himself. He looks up unconcernedly at me and then pokes at the little fire before him between four bricks.

I ask him how long he has been there. "Fifty or sixty years" he says, and then with a long quizzical look he adds, "This country is all changed. We do not have *Sahibs* as we used to have. There was Nicholson *Sahib*. He earned *four hundred* rupees a month." He said "four hundred" with that emphasis that one would imagine he was mentioning the total value of all the precious gems contained in the Tower of London. He went on. "But Nicholson *Sahib* was a real *Sahib*. He could abuse better in our language than any Indian and his voice was like thunder."

He stopped abruptly and after a moment's pause he queried "What is your pay?" "Eight hundred" I replied. He looked at me aghast and long, and then he gave a sceptical smile. "Eight hundred," he said, "then you must be the Collector *Sahib*?"

I assured him I held no such high office. "Eight hundred" he repeated, and then with a little sceptical laugh, he said "I saw you walking to the village on your feet to-day. Eight hundred rupees! Why, Nicholson *Sahib* used to go there on a caparisoned elephant with a red and gold umbrella over him. H'm! eight hundred rupees!"

His voice almost developed a sneer. But he went on talking, "Why, I remember once, when I was acting as footman to the Raja of Majhauuli, we saw Nicholson *Sahib* coming on horseback and the Raja *Sahib* stopped his four-in-hand and got out of the carriage to say *salaam*."

This old mendicant is Sher Ali, a retired servant of the Majhauuli Raj. He asserts he is 100 years of age and I do not think he is far wrong. He remembers the time when the present coachhouse of the Dak Bungalow was raised to its now enormous height and he cannot understand why motor-cars are so low and so silent. To him there is no grandeur in any vehicle which is

neither high nor noisy ! His knowledge of money is antiquated to a degree, and as he receives charity in kind and not in cash, he does not know the depreciation in the purchasing power of the rupee.

In another ten years, I expect, I shall find Sher Ali gone and Maula Bux, the already old *Khansama* sitting in his place—half-demented with senile decay. And yet, how these lovable characters carry us back into the dim past when our fathers travelled long distances by *dak-garries* and used these bungalows as stage-houses. What a memory lies behind them !

And now, with Railways clattering their way across the country, through hewn forest and tunnelled mountain, over great rivers and expansive deserts, we scarcely see these speaking landmarks of ancient days, except on occasional bursts into the countryside, brought about by absolute necessity.

But the Dak Bungalows of India still call. They call to the weary and the heart-sore, they call to those who are oppressed by the humdrum of life's battle, they call to those who want rest, and their message is a message of peace.

KURANTADIH

(The former Ballia).

I SAW it in the Moon's pale light—desolate Kurantadih !
There, like a phantom of the night, it stands in grand solemnity.
The jail-house door is thrown ajar, no sentinel is posted there ;
Its crumbling walls loom from afar and face the world with stony
stare.
The court-room door is opened wide, no longer now the criminal's
way,
Upon the dais no judgment seat, the broken dock an ashcen grey.
The Treasury's overgrown with shrubs, no sentry-guard is
stationed there :
A jackal, frightened by my step, slinks silent from its covert lair.
I wend my way towards the club, where fifty years and more ago,
The *Sahibs* gathered every day when the Eastern sun was sinking
low.
Alas ! one room alone withstands the eking out of Time :
The rest, a mass of ruins lie, dishevelled bricks and mouldering lime.
Headquarters of a District once, this pleasant little station :
Contentment then reigned in this land—not Non-co-operation.
Enshrouded in a distant haze, in silhouette, I faintly see
The ramparts of a Mogul fort,* the pride of Moslem history,

*The reference is to the ruined fort at Buxar.

O monuments of ancient days ! O relics of a glorious past !
Speaks still thy silent majesty, through winter's wind and summer's
blast.

I leave it with a tender sigh—beautiful Kurantadih !

Would that my Muse could soar enough more fitting praise to give
to thee.



THE INDIAN WITCH-DOCTOR

FOR the benefit of those who have not themselves seen an Indian Witch-Doctor casting out an evil spirit I record an experience I had one morning. I was strolling along a narrow meandering pathway in the countryside, followed by an old veteran, a villager of eighty-eight hoary years of age but active withal and still in the possession of his senses and his sight. He had a stick in his hand and it was wonderful with what alacrity he hobbled along behind me.

The countryside was beautiful, the green fields stretching out on every side like well-kept lawns and adorned here and there with the deep red of the velvety Ramdana crop, while the whole scene was swathed in a blue mantle of smoke which emerged from the little village to the east.

The old man, in his rustic manner, was recounting to me tales of the Indian Mutiny when he was a boy of sixteen years of age. He remembered how he fled with the residents of his village, pursued by the punitive expedition led by Mr. Mayne from Allahabad, how a small detachment of cavalry intercepted their path and how the village of Dobaha was bombarded and burnt because it was a rebel centre.

"There is a *pipal* tree a little further ahead," he added, "where the leading rebel of this place was hanged. There it is, *Salib*, on that patch of jungle ahead."

"Is that so"? I said. "How interesting! I must go and see it from close quarters."

The old man did not reply; and seemed to be tiring. After a minute, I said "I'm afraid you're tired, Ram Anup; you had better not come all that way. I'll go on."

Again I got no reply; but without looking back, I knew the old man was shuffling along behind me from the sound of the steadily repeated thud of his stick on the ground. After a long pause, old Ram Anup replied "You are, of course, the *dunya ki malik* (the owner of the world) so you can go there, *Sahib*; but it is very dangerous for one of us."

"But why?" I replied, "What's wrong? I suppose you people have placed a *Bhut* (evil spirit) there." "That's exactly it, *Sahib*," he said with animation and emphasis, "Your wisdom is so vast that you knew exactly what was in my mind. We are a foolish people, *Sahib*; but we believe firmly that there is a *Bhut* that hovers under the shadow of that tree. On more than one occasion it has laid hold of those who went too near it."

He was so earnest that I restrained my laughter and scorn at the suggestion, and replied "Well, look here, Ram Anup, let me test it. You stand on the border of the jungle patch on which



it is situated and watch me while I go and walk all round the tree." "But it won't dare touch you, *Sahib*" he said, "I know it won't. The Englishman is safe. It was the Englishman who hung up the man whose spirit is there. It is the curse of the Englishman on the rebel, so it cannot touch you."

As he spoke, I saw a lad of about fourteen years of age, with a bundle on his back and a stick across his shoulder, stepping gaily along the road which led to Baraut and passed this tree within a couple of hundred yards. On spying me, his interest was evidently aroused and he deviated from the direction to come towards me.

I deliberately altered the course I was pursuing by a slight incline so that the tree lay between me and the boy. Then I stopped and waited. Though the old man's story had a ring of sincerity, I just wished to see if the boy would avoid the tree in approaching me ; but he did not.

He came straight forward in my direction. Nearer and nearer to the tree he approached. Now he was almost under it. The old man's frail eyesight could not perceive his approach, and I was waiting for the moment when the boy was right under the branches, to draw Ram Anup's attention to it and say to him "See, there's an Indian and only a lad. He has neither attempted to avoid the tree nor has anything affected him." The boy came on with jocund step and now he was in the deepest shade of the tree.

"Look !" I said, "Ram Anup, look, there's that boy—."

Suddenly, the boy crumpled up as if struck by lightning. His bundle and his stick went rolling aside. His body was contorted into the most terrible shape. One knee was drawn up near his chin which was thrown back and his arms were twisted behind him. He seemed to be writhing in agony. The paroxysm was terrible. It was all the matter of a second and I seemed to lose all power of speech for that momentary period.



The suddenness, the swiftness with which the boy was struck down, left me powerless, just for the moment, to realise the situation or to decide what should be done. "The boy has fainted under the tree, Ram Anup," I said excitedly, "Send for water quick." "What boy? where?" said Ram Anup in alarm and surprise. "Under the tree. Quick!" I said, as I advanced towards the poor youngster. I did not look back at Ram Anup, but I could hear his weak voice behind me calling to someone in the fields some distance away.

When I reached the boy, I was certain it was an epileptic fit. His eyelids were quivering at a terrible rate, showing beneath them a pair of blood-shot eyes. His whole body was twisting backwards; I was powerless to help him.

In a very short time, a general alarm was raised and people gathered from the surrounding fields, but none dared come nearer than the border of the jungle patch where Ram Anup and I had stood. "Bring water," I called out and someone pretended to run off for it. Suddenly a man, an Ahir, arrived with deep-sunk cheeks and hollowed eyes. He was the witch-doctor.

I didn't know his position, and I demanded rather impatiently of him "Where's the water? I want water to put on this boy's head. What will I do with you?"

He took no notice whatever of me, but sat down on his haunches, his eyes fixed on the boy, his elbow resting on his knees, his fingers entwined and held against his nose, his lips mumbling something rapidly and earnestly. Every now and again, he would utter a sharp guttural sound while his whole body would give a convulsive twitch. It was like a super-hiccough; but it was more weird than farcical. The mumbling sounds became more distinct. I could hear the words 'Ram' and 'Bhawani' and 'Jah' in amongst a

volume of other jumbled sounds and half-articulate words. His twitchings became more severe, the muscles of his whole body were standing out like ropes, his fingers alternately gripped and straightened out like pieces of card-board. His excitement increased to a frenzied extent and as it increased, the boy's convulsive movements decreased.

And now, the witch-doctor seemed to be swept into a typhoon of passion, his body was palpitating, his head was wagging furiously from side to side, his lips were trembling then firmly compressed, his voice rose higher and higher in angry tones, breaking out every now and then with a shriek of fuming rage as he said 'Jah.' And all the time his eyes were fixed upon the boy. Now, suddenly, his voice would fall and he would seem to groan in agony, then with osculating sound from his lips he would seem to be coaxing a wild horse. Another shout of consuming passion, then he gripped his nose, muttering as he did so and pleading "I won't do it again ; I won't do it again." Another loud 'Jah,' then further pleading followed by vile abuse in which every female relative of the evil spirit was dishonoured.

The boy was now lying with widely-opened eyes, staring vacantly upwards as calmly as if he had arisen from the stupor of a deep sleep. Gradually, the passion of the witchdoctor abated as his 'victory' over the evil one increased. Gradually, his composure returned as the *Bhut* pleaded for mercy and promised not "to do it again."

Then, he suddenly ceased operating and the strange look from his eye had gone as he commanded the boy "Get up and get away from under this tree."

The boy rose slowly, but would have fallen if I had not helped him to the village people where they stood. To my surprise no

one recognised him. He was not of the village; but was a passer-by along the way. He described himself as an orphan and resident of a village in the Benares State.

No wonder, then, that he did not know of the lurking evil spirit which held sway under that fateful *pipal* tree. He was surprised when I asked him if he was subject to these fits. He asserted he had never had one before, which is extraordinary, if the fit was epileptic.

Perhaps, old Ram Anup is right and the 'owner of the world' is wrong.

THE THANADAR

OR

Sub-Inspector of Police.

I SEE him on his charger fair,
With Sam Browne belt and martial air,
A lion from his *Thana* lair,
It is the *Thanadar*.

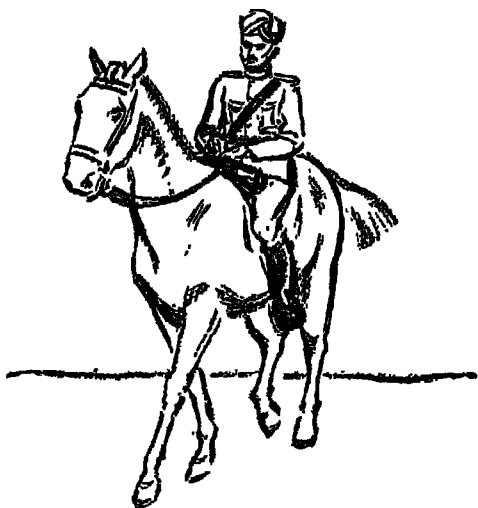
I see him as he rides along,
Ensample of the brave and strong,
With quickened eye for every wrong,
The much-feared *Thanadar*.

Let those abuse who blindly will,
With biting tongue and wicked quill,
His sins and faults; we need him still,
The good old *Thanadar*.

His *Thana* stands a stronghold grand,
Feared by the criminal of the land;
True emblem of the Law's strong hand,
Home of the *Thanadar*.

'Tis there, by these cold whited walls,
The rustic, seeking justice, calls ;
And stricken grief before him falls,
Before the *Thanadar*.

To them, he represents the might,
Of British Justice and of Right.
God grant him strength to use aright,
The powers of *Thanadar*.



THE ROMANCE OF AN INDIAN WEDDING

IT HAS been estimated that no less than a million marriages are annually celebrated in India during the month of March. This orgy of unions between children of tender ages was, of course, the result of the new legislation to put a stop to child-marriages after 1st April, 1930. We witnessed many processions and realised vaguely that they represented "marriages," but we were largely ignorant of many interesting phases in an Indian wedding. I touch on a few here.

While Christian marriage is almost entirely a religious affair, Indian marriage customs still have a touch of the romantic in them and take us back to the time when the bridegroom set forth with martial accompaniment to seize the lady of his choice by armed force. He was accompanied by armed men and horses and elephants in all the panoply of war. He himself was in full war-paint being daubed from head to foot, with saffron. Along with him went tray-bearers carrying presents for his bride, should he succeed in capturing her.

Thus it is that to this day the bridegroom carries with him all the paraphernalia he does in what is known as the *barat*. When he reaches the limits of the village in which the bride resides, his camp stops in a grove and throughout the night, in mimic warfare, martial music is played and trumpeters sound the clarion-call for an imaginary battle. Lest an unexpected attack on the camp is made, the party sits up till the early hours of the morning,

entertained by music and dancing. The father of the bride collects his people and music is played at his door as if to answer the challenge of the raider who has come to seize his daughter.

Then, next day, the bridegroom, mounted on a horse, boldly rides up to the door of the bride's house accompanied by his supporters. He is bedecked in all the finery of a prince and wears, upon his head,, a crown something like the King of Siam. On his arrival, the father of the bride capitulates and does honour to the conquering hero by worshipping him and touching his feet in front of the sacred fire. This is called the *Ghar dwari Puja* (the worship at the door of the house).

From that day onwards, neither the bride's father nor her mother can eat or drink in the village of the bridegroom. This is in keeping with the idea that the parents of the bride are disgraced by the seizure of their daughter by a man who would make her his wife. Thus the position of the parents-in-law of the bride is practically a reversal of the accepted position in European society where the proposing bridegroom-to-be always finds a place, in comic pictures, on the tip of the boot of the irate father of the fair maiden, and the mother-in-law is the bane of his life !

The following night, the bridegroom enters the house of his bride alone, leaving his own followers outside. The family of his bride makes him welcome and the bride is brought out, coyly hiding her face. They



both sit round a sacred fire at which the priests preside. After much chanting of prayers, the corner of the bride's sari (robe) is tied to the corner of the bridegroom's shirt. This is the marriage knot and thus united, the bridal

couple move slowly round the sacred fire seven times while the bride's relatives shower puffed rice on her. This corresponds with the throwing of confetti on the European bridal couple. The ceremony is called the *Bhaunri* and is one of the most important.

In the matter of inheritance of property, whole States are lost or won on the proof or otherwise of the performance of this essential ceremony. Following this, is the *Senduria* ceremony which is almost equally as important as the *Bhaunri*. Here the bridegroom dips his finger in a red powder (called *Senduria*) and after each prayer by the *Pandit* (or priest), he makes a mark on the middle of the bride's forehead. This he repeats seven times.

It is because of the ceremony that we see that every married woman amongst Hindus always wears a red mark from her forehead backwards along the part of her hair. A spinster or a widow cannot wear this distinctive mark and hence it is always possible in a crowd to pick out the married women whose husbands are living.

The third night's ceremony is called the *Baharla* (the outsiders) and on this night, the bridegroom's party freely fraternises with the party of the bride. A feast is given to the whole gathering by the father of the bride. This is his final 'humiliation' and his final acknowledgment of his 'defeat.'

This done, the victorious bridegroom, riding his horse, proceeds homewards, his bride following in a completely covered palanquin and behind her all his mace-bearers and relatives. This is called the *Bida* (or the send-off).

THE INDIAN FORTUNE-TELLER

THE Indian fortune-teller of the type represented below belongs to a class of savants and quacks that is rapidly passing out. Nearly every Englishman in India, especially the British soldier, will recollect meeting him at one time or another. His phraseology is always distinctive and his predictions invariably stereotyped.

HE comes with mystic air
In flowing turmeric robes
With strings and strings of beads
And ear-rings on his lobes.

"I tell it Master's fortune,"
He says in accents mild,
"You'll have it too much money
And plenty wife and child"

He places on my palm,
A dirty string of dice
And tells me all my past
As he heard it from the *Syce**

He speaks of great promotion
Of lucky stars and bad
He tells me where I'll go
And just when I'll be 'had.'

*Syce—groom.

He gives the same old yarn
And tells me very soon,
I'll be pompous General
On the "thirty-first" of June!



IN THE INDIAN JUNGLE

SHIKAR stories are so common and usually so exaggerated that it makes me hesitate to describe my own experience. In view of this, however, I shall attempt to be as precise as possible so that no hyperbole may creep into the account.

It was a lovely sunlit May day in the hills that I set out to make a local inspection seven miles from Naini Tal. On the way I met one of my subordinate officials, a *Patwari*, to whom I mentioned, in the course of conversation, that it was time he gave me information about the whereabouts of a tiger which I could shoot. "Impossible in these parts at the present time of the year," he said dejectedly "but in the winter," he added, "there will be plenty of opportunities." The words had hardly escaped his lips when, by one of the strangest coincidences I know, a villager hailed out "*Patwari* Ji! Does the *Sahib* know that a tiger killed a cow two miles away last night?

The *Patwari*'s lips curled with disgusted incredulity as he turned to me and said "It is just like these people, *Sahib*. He has discovered you want to shoot a tiger and he thinks it will please you immensely if he gives you a yarn like that. It is an obvious untruth."

The villager overheard him as he came nearer, and cried "It is not untrue, I assure you, *Patwari* Ji. I have seen the tiger at the carcase only this morning. I saw him with my own eyes." The *Patwari* now looked angry and said "You add absurdity to falsehood. The idea of a tiger eating a 'kill' by day." I felt, however, that the villager was telling the truth and I said,

"If it is only two miles, let us go and see, anyhow. "Very well, *Sahib*" replied the *Patwari*, "but we must take this man with us and make him swallow his own words if he takes us on a wild goose chase, which I am sure he is doing." So off we went.

"Now we are near the spot," whispered the villager and he was obviously nervous. We mounted the crest of the hill and as we did so, there we saw the carcase of a cow lying down in the valley twenty yards below us. We walked right on as the *Patwari* said "You see, *Sahib*, there's no tiger, this is probably an animal which has died of—God! there it is!" and he dropped to the ground as if he had been shot.

There, within 15 yards of us, was a tiger which rose slowly from behind the carcase and slouched away up the thickly wooded ravine. I seized the *Patwari*'s gun and brought it to my shoulder when the villager grasped my arm exclaiming in hushed and excited voice :

"For God's sake don't *Sahib*. It will kill us all. You can shoot it from a *machan* this evening." I restrained myself and I only know now how providential it was that I did.

I then sent for my brother from Naini Tal and meanwhile had two *machans* prepared. Evening came, and we climbed into our own respective machans on different trees. These were wonderfully well-made, so completely enwrapped in leaves that no one could tell that they could form the temporary lair of a human being. And then our men departed.

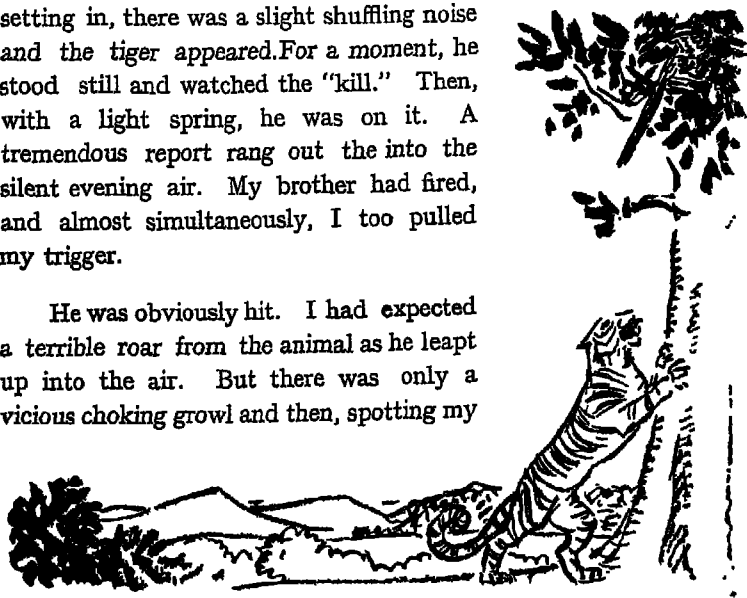
We were alone in the forest. It was evening and the sun was just dropping down over the crest of the hill. The twitter of the birds of the forest gradually died away. The silence increased and was broken only by the occasional creaking of crickets.

In the intervals the hush was wonderful. I could hear the distant mountain stream like a long-continued sigh. A leaf fluttered down from the tree on which I sat and the sound as it touched the ground was like a distant crash. I passed my hand across my face and even that gentle movement sounded like the rustling of paper.

The silence was majestic, as we waited with eyes intently fixed on the silent carcase of the cow lying in weird and deathful stillness.

Our guns were focussed on the corpse as the time passed slowly on. Dare we move in the slightest and a tell-tale rustle would instantly be created. I could hear my very breath. And then suddenly, after nearly two hours' waiting, just as dusk was setting in, there was a slight shuffling noise and the tiger appeared. For a moment, he stood still and watched the "kill." Then, with a light spring, he was on it. A tremendous report rang out into the silent evening air. My brother had fired, and almost simultaneously, I too pulled my trigger.

He was obviously hit. I had expected a terrible roar from the animal as he leapt up into the air. But there was only a vicious choking growl and then, spotting my



brother, he charged his tree. So madly reckless was his onslaught that he stumbled and fell in the intervening ravine.

My brother fired again but missed on this occasion. Up the tiger rose and continued his charge, leaping up repeatedly towards my brother's *machan*, and shredding the bark from the tree. I have heard the words "rage," and "passion" applied to human beings; but this was a rage and a passion that I could never have conceived.

The animal was trembling all over his agile frame, tearing at the base of the tree, audibly fuming. Unfortunately the tree which stood between my brother's *machan* and mine prevented me from seeing him at this moment to enable me to shoot, but I could hear all the varied sounds of his mad anger and attempts to scale the tree. My brother, too, could not see him to fire, as he was directly under his *machan*, hidden also by thick shrub.

For half-an-hour or more he vented his agonised wrath on the base of the tree, the heavy breathing gradually died away and we decided he was either dead or had decamped. Darkness had now set in. We fired two shots into the ground below us as a precautionary measure preparatory to coming down, and as there was no response, we descended from our respective perches. With the utmost caution we returned to the village determined to stay there the night and trace the tiger next morning.

We slept under a little thatched roof and early next morning proceeded to the "kill." We could distinctly see the blood marks the tiger had left behind and judging from the quantity of blood we saw splattered about everywhere we decided he must have laid down and died not very far off from that spot.

Up the valley we went, stumbling over rocks and boulders, deeper and deeper into the forest, following every spot of blood.

And then the valley became so narrow that we could only walk in single file. I was at the head of this solemn procession, behind me was a local landlord named Bachi Singh, then my brother, followed by half-a-dozen villagers.

We must have proceeded thus for half-a-mile when suddenly from the thicket straight in front of us and only five yards away there was a whining gurgling noise followed by a muffled "woof." A tawny-coloured streak shot out of the thicket. There was no time to speak, there was hardly time to act; but I instinctively brought my gun up to my shoulder and fired. It was my right barrel which bore lethal.

I do not mind admitting that at that moment I was the most excited—perhaps the most frightened—man in Asia. My gun was wobbling before me and, needless to add, I missed. In the next moment, the tiger stood rampant before me and I fired my left barrel into its mouth. It lashed out at me viciously, just grazing the hand with which I supported my gun.

It was at that moment I realised as never before what it is to be face to face with death. I cannot describe the feeling of utter helplessness, the feeling of numbness that overpowered my brain, the feeling of complete resignation. My mind simply stopped working. There was, for a brief moment, a complete cessation of thought. And then realisation suddenly returned, and I shouted to the Forest Guard for more cartridges. He had fled incontinently and then up stood the tiger again and lashed out at Bachi Singh, smashing his gun into three pieces. Almost simultaneously it had grasped Bachi Singh round the shoulders and rolled over with him on to the ground.

A sickening sound of the crackling of bones emerged from the bloody maelstrom near my feet while blood splashed out freely and covered my clothes. I shouted to my brother "We're finished; but fire if you can."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when I discovered that Bachi Singh and the tiger had fallen on to my brother. There he lay rolling and writhing, Bachi Singh on him and the tiger over both. My catridges finished, no hope of getting any more immediately, I waited for my turn. My feeling was that it would not take long to see the tiger finish both of them off and then finish me. Instinctively I stood with the gun to my shoulder.

After a few seconds—which seemed like years—the tiger turned on me, looked into the barrels of my gun, winced and bounded away into the thicket nearby. Quickly we got Bachi Singh away to the hospital. Both his arms from the elbows down had been chewed up. My brother escaped with a few scratches. Our followers had all decamped except for my Orderly whom I sent off to collect men and guns to beat out the animal. To leave him would have been unconscionable for the very sound of the human voice to a wounded tiger—particularly one who had tasted of the sweetness of human blood—would have meant death to the unwary victim.

A little later the men arrived and we commenced our march up the narrow valley streetched out in line, pushing our way through thorny thickets and closely-grown shrubs. We had only gone a few paces when once again the tiger shot out and vigorously slapped a beater across the head, tearing away half his scalp.

As he fell, the tiger jumped on to his back and tore his coat to shreds springing round again and biting viciously at his legs. None of us dare shoot lest we perchance hit the beater. But in

the next second, the tiger leapt off and as he did so two reports rang out into the silent forest air. The tiger fell to the ground writhing in his death-struggles, rolling to the bottom of the valley and lying still.

My shot had gone through his heart and my brother's through his head. Cautiously we approached it and then we had the only joke of the day. The tiger was a tigress—and a magnificent specimen at that. We discovered now that my brother's shot of the previous evening had broken her jawbone and this alone saved our lives.

But danger has its thrills, consequently its attractions and the incident has only made me long for a repetition of similar excitement. It is not courage, it is just madness—but it is an ecstatic madness withal.

DOWN BY THE GAULA.

**A legend connected with the
Ranibagh Mela at Naini Tal.**

ON the glimmering heights of Katur's peaks
Lived a beautiful queen of old :
Of the Rani Jia tradition speaks :
Of her terrible plight, we're told,
Down by the Gaula.

Now the Rani Jia was sore distressed
No child to her was born,
The only cure, the Pandits pressed,
That she should bathe at morn,
Down by the Gaula.

So the Rani Jia went forth one day
With pomp and pageantry
And pitched her camp, so people say,
At Ranibagh, you see
Down by the Gaula.

Refrain

"*Jai Jia*," loud and strong,
Cries the ever-swelling throng,
"*Jai Jia*" is the song
Of the river all along
Down by the Gaula.



At the break of dawn she silent sped
 To the river's edge to pray,
 And a golden hair from her lovely head
 In the stream went gliding away,
 Down by the Gaula.

The Rohilla sat at the foot of the hills
 Gazing with eagle eye
 At the eddying spurts and rippling rills:
 Saw the strand as it floated by,
 Down by the Gaula.

The Rohilla chief with a flashing glance
 Looked hard at the golden strand,
 And summoned his forces with matchlock and lance
 To advance upon that land,
 Down by the Gaula.

With his charger hot and his men behind
 He rode to the river-side,
 Before his leering eyes to find
 The Rani lying, open-eyed,
 Down by the Gaula.

In nymph-like loveliness she lay
 In Gaula's sweet embrace.
 Kissed by the sunshine's gentle ray,
 Angelic was her face,
 Down by the Gaula.

Refrain

"*Jai Jla*," loud and strong
 Cries the ever-swelling throng,
 "*Jai Jla*" is the song
 Of the river all along
 Down by the Gaula.

"A **hour*i she," the chief exclaimed
 Intoxicatedly.
 Like startled hart and all ashamed
 She crouched upon her knee
 Down by the Gaula.

She raised her eyes to'rds heav'n and prayed,
 The tears flowed glist'ning down,
 How long would rescue be delayed!
 The chieftain gave a frown,
 Down by the Gaula.

Of a sudden, she sprang from her watery bed
 And sped to a rocky cave,
 "Twere better to be entombed and dead,
 My honour, O Heav'n, save!"
 Down by the Gaula.

* A feminine angel in Muslim belief.

With angry scowl the chief strode on
 To enter the darksome cell,
 A light from above, of a sudden, shone :
 On the Rani's form it fell
 Down by the Gaula.

For heav'n had heard her pleading prayer
 And rent the rock in twain,
 Go now and see the opening there
 And hear the grand refrain
 Down by the Gaula.

Refrain

"*Jai Jai*," loud and strong
 Cries the ever-swelling throng,
 "*Jai Jai*" is the song
 Of the river all along
 Down by the Gaula.

Then, quick, the Rani scrambled through
 That God-sent hiatus,
 Back to her army bold and true
 New filled with animus,
 Down by the Gaula.

There tearfully she told her tale,
 In shame her head was bowed ;
 Brave Katur's warriors would not fail !
 Their war-drums beat aloud,
 Down by the Gaula.

With flashing falchions now they surged
 Against their fiery foes,
 With frenzied fury hotly urged,
 With arrows and with bows
 Down by the Gaula.

So sudden dealt the grand assault,
 The Rohillas turned and fled,
 Slaughtered, pursued, with never a halt,
 Diminishing as they sped
 Down by the Gaula.

The people remember this victory still;
 At Ranibagh every year
 War-drums and banners come down every hill
 With echoes of "Jai Rani Jia,"
 Down by the Gaula.

Refrain

"*Jai Jai*," loud and strong
 Cries the ever-swelling throng,
 "*Jai Jai*" is the song
 Of the river all along
 Down by the Gaula.

A PLAIN STORY FROM THE PLAINS

THE belief that "Blood will tell" has probably been more firmly established in India than anywhere else. The whole conception of this belief is wrapped up in the word "*aukath*." A story which illustrates this is commonly related in the plains of India. It is this:—

A Rajah was entering his palace-gate when he observed a young woman standing outside, begging for alms. So struck was he by her beauty that he immediately ordered her to be brought to the palace, bathed and dressed in clean clothes.

When she appeared before him, so heightened was her charm in her lovely regalia that even the more refined beauties of the court could not vie with her.

The Rajah decided to marry her and give her the paramount place amongst his Ranis.

With dazzling pomp and pageantry, the marriage was performed and the new Rani was installed in a beautiful palace of her own, with scores of hand-maidens to attend to her every whim and desire, with tasty and delectable food served on golden plates and with all the luxury and comfort due to a princess of the first rank.

But, alas ! the Rani who had been thin enough in her days of poverty, now gradually became emaciated. Her beauty faded like the withering of a rose and the Rajah was bitterly disappointed.

One day the Rajah enquired of her what was on her mind that she should be dwindling like this when he had given her so many comforts and had done all he could to make her happy.

She wept and said that she could not explain her trouble but suggested that the only way in which she could return to happiness and good health would be for her to be permitted to have her meals alone by herself in a locked room wherein no servant would be permitted till she had completed her repast.

"What could be easier", exclaimed the Raja, "I shall issue orders immediately in accordance with your wishes." The orders were issued and strictly complied with.

To his surprise, the Rajah observed that his whimsical little Rani improved in appearance every day till she became lovelier than ever.

Inquisitive to know the reason for this transformation, the the Rajah determined to ascertain the cause, even if he had to descend to prying methods.

He made a small hole in the door and when the Rani had closed herself in for her mid-day meal, he peeped at her.

Imagine his consternation, when he saw the Rani dividing the food into a number of parts and placing each part on the *ataskhanas* (wall brackets) round the room,. Then she repeated the itinerary, folding her hands in front of each *ataskhana* and saying, in pleading accents, "*Eh paisa ka khana mil jai*" (Give me one pice worth of food), before she ate the several instalments of her food. This process she repeated in front of each *ataskhana*, till her meal was finished.



The blood of the beggar girl still ran through her veins; her whole constitution demanded importunacy; her whole soul craved for that to which she had been born.

"Blood will tell."

LEGEND AND FACT

IN the grand old Himalayas
There was told a legend fair
Of a subterranean streamlet
And a buried temple there.

From the bowels of the mountain
From Bhim Tal a mile or two
Burst one day the Nal Daminti:
Half the legend had come true!

Then one day there came a warrior
Who had served his country well,
Not upon the public platform,
But in war—through storm and shell.

He had now retired from service
With a solemn vow that he
For twelve years would serve his Maker
As a silent devotee.

Leaving all he held so dearly.
Leaving children, wife, and home,
Leaving his beloved country,
Went he out to serve his *"Om "

*The Vedic name for God.

Armed with Faith—a stronger armour
Than he wore in days gone by,
Came he to the Nal Daminti,
There to live and there to die.

Here he held his silent vigils
Through the night and through the day,
Praying that he may discover
Where the hidden temple lay.

Here he made his sacred fire
By it, on a ragged mat,
Saffron-robed and like a Buddha
Immobile he silent sat.

He was known as Mauni Baba
By the village people there,
"He was just a mad ascetic
Living by a panther's lair."



Little did they know his mission
Less they knew his trustful creed
That he'd have a revelation
Which would be his ample need.

In the silence of the forest,
In the silence of the night,
Lo! there came a vision wondrous
To the Baba's inner sight,

Telling him where lay the temple,
Hid by centuries of dust,
Telling him the spot exactly
Where to dig the earthen crust.

There and then, the holy soldier
Rose from his reposeful rest,
Eagerly he hastened onwards
To obey the great behest.

In the darkness went he groping
Till he found the sacred place,
There and then, his excavations
Started on the mountain face.

Digging daily, hour by hour,
Till the setting sun had gone,
Where the vision indicated
Mauni Baba laboured on.

Then, one day, an idol sacred,
Many hundred years of age,
Was unearthed, and then another,
By this humble, earnest sage.

Remnants of the temple ancient
Here he found in plenitude,
Which he ranged around his shanty
Where they could be clearly viewed.

O'er this sacred spot the Baba
Now has built a temple new,
In the unbelieving people
Trust enduring to imbue.

There the grand old Mauni Baba
Sits enthroned, without a care,
Silent still his vigil keeping,
Lost in thankfulness and prayer.

MAGISTERIAL EXPERIENCES IN INDIA

TWENTY years of magisterial experience in India brings with it a flood of instances, at times humorous, at times tinged with pathos and at others, surprising.

I can never forget for example the humour of the situation when I austerey questioned a person accused of having fished in the forbidden part of the lake at Naini Tal and he replied "I confess to have committed the offence but it was not my fault. It was the wretched fish that drew my line into the forbidden area."

One of the offences which always calls forth sympathy from my heart and quite naturally too, is attempted suicide. I remember when I was but a young and inexperienced magistrate I felt so sorry for a woman who was accused of having attempted to commit suicide because her husband maltreated her that I released her almost immediately. She had been rescued in the nick of time from the well into which she had jumped. The sight of this miserable creature standing shivering before me made my heart bleed and with a desire to be kind I merely sentenced her to detention till the rising of the Court. I was soon to learn the folly of this misplaced leniency.

Within ten minutes of the closing of my Court, as I was on my homeward journey, I heard a hue and cry from the railway-line which ran nearby to the Courts. I moved towards the little crowd that had gathered at the spot of the tragedy and there to my horror, I saw the poor wretched woman whom I had sentenced

so shortly before, lying cut into two pieces by a passing train. That experience taught me that such offenders should be given time to resume their mental balance before being set free.

One of the most amazing, if pathetic experiences I had in my earlier days of magistracy was of a handsome young man who came to me with his eyes brimming with tears and related a terrible tale of how his wife had been run away with by a dreadful brigand who had come over the border from the Benares State. The sight of this splendid specimen of manhood bursting into tears, was pathetic in the extreme. He begged that warrants should be issued for the immediate arrest of this terrible character who had abducted his wife and also for the restoration of the wife herself. He assured me that any delay in the issue of the warrants would mean the allowance of time to the villain to carry his wife over the border into the Benares State from where the extradition laws would make it even more difficult for her to be secured. I promptly issued two warrants one for his wife and one for the abductor. So anxious was I to help this heart-broken husband that I even committed the irregularity of issuing special orders to the police to go with the complainant, who would identify his wife, and make her over to him. I fixed a date on which the arrested accused was to be put up before me for trial and also directed that the complainant and his wife should appear before me on that date.

The case came up for trial in due course and into the dock was led, under arrest, a venerable old gentleman, with rustic simplicity radiating from his face. He was in tears and he related his story, which was afterwards confirmed by undeniable evidence, that the woman was his own young wife, who tired of him, had fallen in love with this handsome young paramour who had so cleverly duped me by reason of my inexperience. There were

no signs of either the complainant or the woman in question and I have never heard of them since. I released the old man immediately but felt that if ever I have wronged anyone it was this innocent old rustic who not only lost his wife but was incarcerated for 10 days just because I had not acquired the experience of demanding proof of marriage before taking the stringent step that I did.

But even experience cannot always combat successfully against falsity and cunning.

Here is an example which was given to me for my guidance by my father who had 30 years' experience.

He was holding a magisterial inquiry into a murder case. The accused pleaded guilty to having murdered his father-in-law with the leg of a bed. The village people deposed to having overheard a violent quarrel between the accused and his father-in-law two days before the mutilated body of an old man was found lying in the jungle adjoining the village.

The wife of the accused deposed to having seen her husband pick up the leg of a bed and hit her father across the head. The six-year old son of the accused corroborated his mother. The



Medical Officer stated that though the body was too mutilated for identification, it was certain that death was caused by a fracture of the skull.

The case seemed as clear as daylight and no flaw existed.

My father had decided to commit the accused for murder when an old man rushed into the Court and stood white and trembling before him.

He was the father-in-law of the accused who was said to have been the victim of this murder. He explained that he certainly did have a quarrel with his son-in-law on the date mentioned and had left the house in consequence, but that he had been in the Punjab for a month and on hearing of this case he had come.

Later inquiry showed that the Station Officer of Police was so convinced that the corpse found on the borders of the village was that of the father-in-law of the accused that he had threatened to prosecute the whole family, the accused, his wife and child for combining in murdering the old man, unless the accused pleaded guilty and his wife and son gave direct evidence against him.

The corpse was later found to be that of an old *faqir* who had accidentally fallen over a stone and killed himself.

The Station Officer was convicted and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment but fortunately those days have gone and such instances of false prosecution for capital offences are now extremely rare.

The Magistrate in India has to fulfil dual functions judicial and executive. So far, I have only touched on judicial functions and I could elaborate on this but I shall mention just one extraordinary experience I had in connection with my executive functions.

The magistrate in India has not only to weigh up right and wrong in cases but he has also to be a *Ma-Bap* (mother and father) to the people of his charge and give them protection from all and sundry who would jeopardise their safety.

It was in 1931 that I received a report from the *patwari* of a hill circle that a woman of the village of Guniarao had reported to him that she had met a tiger in the jungle, that this tiger had attacked her and when it stood rampant before her, it had suddenly transformed into a man who had threatened that the next time she entered the jungle he would kill her. The *patwari* added in his report that the woman had been so insistent that he should record her report that he did so; but he opined that as she was expecting a baby shortly and hence did not seem to be in her normal state of mind. He assured me that she was of good character and was the mother of six children so that this was no attempt to get a young paramour into trouble.

I remember I wrote on the papers the rather contemptuous remark "The woman must be mad. Let the papers be filed." These papers still exist in the archives of the Naini Tal Record Room.

A little over a month after these papers were filed there came another report from the same *patwari* that the woman mentioned in his previous report had been killed by a tiger. It was a terrible shock to me, especially as I had treated the previous report with such utter contempt and I determined to ascertain the facts on the spot.

Guniarao is a remote village in the most distant part of Naini Tal district, but I managed to take a car along the foot of the hills on a fiendishly bad road till I got to the nearest spot from which

it was necessary to climb on foot. There was no time to lose on making arrangements for a comfortable journey.

Thus, within 24 hours, I was on the spot and I held an immediate inquiry. The victim's daughter of eight years of age stated that her baby sister was a fortnight old when she carrying the baby, accompanied her mother to the stream in the village jungle where her mother proceeded to bathe. Presently she noticed a tiger coming down the hill in the direction of herself and the baby who was in her arms. Her mother who was in the stream a short distance off, espied the tiger at the same time as she did and shrieked. The tiger, hearing the mother's shriek, turned on her immediately and started to devour her while the little girl ran with the baby to the village.

The narrative was so simply told, with that consummate candour of which a child only is capable, that it was impossible not to believe the story *in toto*.

I went to the spot with the village people and saw the corpse of the woman which had been dragged, evidently by the hair, into a bush. Only the marks of the tiger's teeth on the woman's neck were visible. He had evidently sucked her blood only and left the corpse for a later meal.

It was getting dark and I knew the animal must have been somewhere near at the time and would probably have noticed the putting up of a *machan*, but there was no help for it and I decided to take the risk of discovery. I had a hasty *machan* put up on a tree nearby and sitting in it, as comfortably as I could I sent the village people away.

But it was a long night of useless waiting and watching, for the animal never appeared.

Next morning we tracked its pad-marks to a distance of nearly two miles away. There I had another night of unsuccessful watching from a *machan*.

The morning after that again I heard of two bulls having been killed by him three miles away. That night, I shot him, pulling off both barrels of my rifle at the same time. I need not elaborate on the shikar part of this story as my main object is to emphasise the extraordinary nature of the victim's premonition which I, in my ignorance, thought was a mere hallucination of the mind caused by her delicate state of health at the time.

I could multiply instances of extreme interest which have come to my notice during the period of my magisterial experiences in India but this chapter is already long enough.

THE CURSE OF BARAM DUTT

(Bemaita lies a few miles from Bhim Tal,
and can be seen to advantage from Jilling.)

BEMAITA, on a rugged cliff, overlooks a valley fair,
Rows on rows of snow-white houses glisten in the dazzling glare,
'Tis a village now in ruins, all the doors are shut;
Have you never heard the story of the curse of Baram Dutt ?

Five and thirty years have vanished since this was a rustic town,
With a hundred people living on its borders of renown;
But one day there came a beggar seeking shelter and a hut;
Then it was the curse was uttered by the saintly Baram Dutt.

Spurned by everyone he went to, relegated to the bin,
Hungry, cold, and desperate; not a home to ask him in,
He departed from the village cursing every mound and rut,
Cursing every man and woman; 'twas the curse of Baram Dutt.

"Every living soul will perish ere a score of years has passed,
Animals and all will suffer for this insult to the priestly caste."
This provoked the people's laughter, and a joking village knut,
Said to him, with cold derision, "This the curse of Baram Dutt?"

Not another word was spoken by the hoary mendicant,
And the people of the village quite forgot the incident.
Fifteen years of peace and comfort. plenteous corn was cut,
Children in increasing number. "False the curse of Baram Dutt ?"

Suddenly an epidemic swooped like falcon from the air
 Down upon that happy village, filling it with anxious care.
 One by one the homes were emptied and the last was Debi Bhatt,
 Whispering, as his spirit left him, "Tis the curse of Baram Dutt.'

When his curse was thus accomplished, came again that aged saint,
 Saffron-robed, and on his forehead ashen lines of sacred paint;
 "Here I die and happy I; nowhere better than this hut,
 For'tis here I first pronounced the dreadful curse of Baram Dutt."

Thus his name was also written on Bernaita's roll of dead,
 Thus his peace again he'd made with those who'd only "gone ahead."
 In the shadows of the ev'ning comes a wail of "Ram Ram Sutt."*
 From a ghostly voice that echoes "Tis the curse of Baram Dutt."

This the story of Bernaita; go and see it lone and still,
 Standing in its solemn grandeur on a Himalayan hill;
 Mutely eloquent its language, eloquently mute the hut,
 Where was fully consummated once the curse of Baram Dutt.

*These are the words repeated in chorus by Hindu pall-bearers
 in a funeral procession.



IN AN INDIAN STATE

“**W**ANTED, a Political and Private Secretary for an Indian State. Salary Rs. 1200 to Rs. 1500 according to qualifications.”

Such was the advertisement that met my eye, as I turned over the first page of my morning paper. A thrill ran through me and the prospect of adding a few hundred rupees to my salary, gripped my heart. Within ten minutes my application was ready for the post. In due course, it was forwarded by the Head of my Department to His Highness's Government.

For a fortnight I was filled with the torment of unsatisfied expectation, and then it came. A telegram was handed to me which contained the encouraging message, “Come at once for interview with His Highness.” I leapt from my chair and dashed into the more secluded apartments of my house and held the telegram in front of my wife's eyes and told her how this would be a stepping-stone to the Premiership of one of the leading States in India.

She joined in my delight and happily agreed that I was bound to reach the highest rung of the official ladder and comfortingly added that it was always been her belief that “Any fool could attain such heights in an Indian State provided he once got a footing there !”

That evening I was merrily travelling along by the Punjab Mail for my destination and wondering how this could be considered one of the fastest trains in India when it seemed, to my impatient mind, to crawl at the pace of a bullock-cart on a muddy road.

The following morning I stepped out of the train fit to walk in to Bond Street and attempted to commandeer the only vehicle which stood at the Railway Station. What the jaded animal yoked to this wretched conveyance lacked in vigour was amply compensated for by the insolence of the driver who, demanded five rupees for the journey of half a mile and politely informed me, in advance, that bargaining would be useless. Till such time as I agreed he would not permit me to mount his chariot. He apparently gleaned I was from British India and when I gently assured him that full payment would be made according to the authorised rates, he reminded me, with raucous voice, that this was an Indian State not British India, so I could not have everything my own way. My anxiety to have my interview overpowered me, and rather than waste time, I paid in advance, the amount demanded, which was ten times the prevailing rate.

In course of time I reached the Prime Minister's house and saw half-a-dozen liveried orderlies standing with their heads together like a brood of vultures waiting for scent of the next visiting 'carcase' at which they could have the pleasure of picking.

The arrival of my contraption drew them closer to me. One by one they slouched up, looking at me quizzically as they came. The leading one actually made an attempt to give me a Salaam, though the effort was an extremely lethargic one. I pulled out my card and handed it to this gentleman who played with it a while in his hands, looked at me absent-mindedly and then greedily, then again absent-mindedly, this time with a little touch of disappointment and disgust. Finally, he put my card into his pocket and soothingly informed me that the Prime Minister was having his food and would not be able to see me for a couple of hours.

It was not till later that I realised that I could have seen the Prime Minister in the twinkling of an eye by the tinkling of a rupee.

After standing in the blazing sun for half an hour wondering exactly what to do, the liveried gentlemen having withdrawn to the remotest corner of the compound, I thought I would make bold and enter the drawing room which invitingly faced me and thus while away the remaining hour and a half, I had been sentenced to wait.

Half an hour later, a beautiful white car drew up under the portico and a big strapping man dressed in a gorgeous uniform of blue and gold stepped out from behind the wheel. "He must be either a Major-General of the State Army or a chauffeur of the Royal garage", I mused to myself.

Without invitation, he walked through the hall, straight to the inner apartments and after ten minutes or so emerged arm-in-arm with a slightly-built gentleman, neatly dressed in a long black coat and *churidar* pyjamas.

Before I could decide what to do, the uniformed gentleman jumped into the car behind the wheel and the other took his seat at the back. The two doors of the car were banged in simultaneously and the engine of the car started to purr.

With quick resolution, I dashed up to the car with the telegram of His Highness held out in my hand and addressing the black-coated gentleman, I said, "Pardon me, but are you the Prime Minister, I have a telegram from His Highness calling me here for an interview." With suave manner and refined accent, the gentleman in the black coat replied, "Oh, that's all right. You may wait here in the Guest House. His Highness is in camp,

and will see you next month." I was so stunned at this delightful injunction that I could make no immediate reply. The car burst forward and was out of the gate before I could even realise what had happened.

Finally, I decided to find the officiating Private Secretary-if such existed-and turned to my tongawallah for help on the point.

For the small consideration of another two rupees he thought he would help me and within five minutes I had found the place. The officiating Private Secretary was an Englishman, I was told. Oh, the joy of the thought! Here at last I would find brotherly sympathy and help.

As at the Prime Minister's, there was a band of liveried orderlies at the corner of the house, but they would not deign to take any notice of me and even the offer of my card was rejected with silent contempt. One of them a moment later, barked out that the Sahib was asleep and would not see any body for the next two hours. He then turned his back on me and continued an amusing anecdote he was relating to his brother orderlies. Evidently news of my failure to grease the palms of the Prime Minister's orderlies had travelled more rapidly than myself and reached here before me.

I decided to adopt the same tactics as at the Prime Minister's. I walked boldly to the drawing room door and tapped. Receiving no response, I thought the best procedure would be to enter and sit down again for another trial of patience extending over a period of two hours.

As I parted the heavy curtains and made my entry I was overcome by the most sudden and chilling embarrassment that I have ever experienced in all my life. From the couch that faced

me, there shot a fleeting vision of a lady in her negligé taking her flight into an inner room: from the other corner of the couch rose the form of an angry Englishman with scarlet face, but handsome withal.

As soon as I could find the words I blurted out, "I am so sorry to burst in like this, but what is one to do, when your orderlies refuse to announce me. I must see you on an urgent matter. Here is a telegram from His Highness commanding me to come for an interview with him and I am told by the Prime Minister that I am to wait here two months to fulfill my mission. I'm absolutely desperate and must return to my post in British India immediately if there is no prospect of seeing His Highness to-day, as I only, have three days' casual leave at my disposal. Can't you help me."

This long and impassioned speech evidently gave mine host an opportunity to control himself and decide to snub me off more calmly than he otherwise would have done. He replied, obviously gritting his teeth, "I'm sorry but you can't see His Highness, as he is in camp. You will be lucky if you see him within two months. The best thing to do, is to go back to your job in British India." All my ideas about a Britisher's sense of fellow-feeling and possible sympathy, suddenly crashed.

Guilty as I had been of an offence against etiquette I found myself rapidly losing my own temper "Thanks" I said, "I'm d-d sorry I ever came. Good morning."

I left the room as quickly as possible, hopped into my tonga with alacrity and told the driver to make for the Railway Station, resolved to shake the dust of Indian States off my feet for ever.

As I approached the Railway station, filled with a bitterness I had seldom experienced before, I noticed the sign-board of the Post and Telegraph Office. A thought flashed across my mind. Could it be possible that I could get the ear of His Highness by sending an urgent telegram direct to him."

An obliging Telegraph-master furnished me with the private telegraphic address of His Highness and I promptly sent an urgent reply-paid telegram to this address, mentioning to His Highness that I had arrived in compliance with his command,, but that I could not get access to him.

I asked the Telegraph-master to send any reply to me at the Railway station which was next door.

I sat at a deserted station in an empty waiting room for an hour expecting a reply any moment. And then I was handed over a note by a messenger. It was from the officiating Private Secretary who asked me to see him immediately.

My blood commenced to flow more rapidly through my veins as I saw a moral victory before me.

"My telegram had reached His Highness and his officials were now becoming more accommodating." With this thought in my mind and with buoyant step I made for the officiating Private Secretary's house. The orderlies who had been previously so indifferent had now become courteous almost to obsequiousness. I was ushered in immediately but I was soon to be disillusioned. As I entered the drawing-room, the officiating Private Secretary met me with menacing glance and a face more redolent than before.

"So you have attempted to report us to His Highness," he said in an angry tone", but you have failed for here is your tele-

gram and my answer is the same as I gave you this morning. You cannot see His Highness. That is all, thank you."

I took my sentence with fortitude and with a quick "Good afternoon" left the room. What else could I do?

I got back to the railway-station as quickly as possible and once again in the waiting room, sank into a chair in utter dejection. It was an hour for my train and I was impatient that it should be in time to enable me to leave the State as rapidly as possible. Half an hour later an important-looking Bengali gentleman burst into the room with pompous air and sat down across the table in front of me.

He studied me for a full minute and then with a tone which to my disconsolate mind appeared to be a taunting one, said "How did you come here?"

"Business" I said laconically. I was too terribly miserable to elaborate on the point.

Quick as a flash, came a further question "What business? I was about to be angry at this show of inquisitiveness, but I controlled myself and said almost as laconically as before, "Private business."



I thought that would be the end of the conversation but it was not to be. "What private business?" said my companion.

That sent me completely off my balance and with impatience and annoyance, I protested "Pardon me, but this is too bad. I tell you I came on private business and you ask me the exact nature of that business. Surely this is positively indecent." This rather emphatic protest did not perturb my genial companion and he only smiled and said with a voice filled with ineffable pity, "Don't be angry, please. I know exactly why you are here. Hundreds of others have been here for the same purpose and they have gone away not less chagrined at their reception. You have come for the post of Political and Private Secretary to His Highness. You have sent your photo with your application. There is a whole room in the Royal apartments set aside for photos of applicants such as yourself, but it usually ends there. There are two applicants now in the guest-house who have waited two months and more. They may wait another six months and then be fortunate to obtain the interview they seek. Why don't you do the same? You will have good food, good drinks and all the comfort you want."

I was completely taken aback and felt truly sorry that I had rather rudely reprimanded this Good Samaritan. I lost no time to offer a full and humble apology for what I had said. My companion was a student of human nature and was not tardy in accepting my apology and expressed his appreciation of my feelings. He added, "But why do you want to take up service of this sort? You have a good job in British India. Why do you want to forsake it?"

"Do you see", said I "I shall get Rs. 1500/- a month here which means a few hundreds more than I get in British India. I confess it is pure greed on my part."

" But what will you do with Rs. 1500/- a month here ?" said he. "You have to pay the whole of that amount in little dribs and drabs to the household establishment to keep their mouths shut from making any complaint against you to His Highness, otherwise you cannot retain your job."

" Good Heavens ! " I said "What then will I live on ? "

"Oh, that's alright" said my good companion "you get Rs. 1500/- a month in little dribs and drabs from others to keep your own mouth shut from making any complaint to His Highness against them. So you are square !"

The full horror of this situation then dawned on me. The train just then clattered along the platform and stopped. I said a hasty 'Good-bye' to my friend and thanking him profusely for his help and advice, I sprang into a first class compartment and thanked God that I had escaped a terrible future.

I should add that while this story is based on actual experience, in fairness to Indian States in general I should add that the ruler of this state has since been deposed by the British Government and that it would be wrong to assume that all Indian States are so painfully mismanaged as this one.

BAZAAR PERSONALITIES

[With apologies to the author of those noble lines
"The king was in his counting-house, etc."]



THE king was in his counting-house
Counting out his money,
The Indian version of this tale
Is almost just as funny.

The *bania's* in his greasy shop
Weighing out the rice.
The *bania's* wife is sitting by
Counting out the pice.

The *saudawallah's* in his shop
Doling out the grain,
The pariah-dog is slinking by
A-licking "at" the drain.

The *beeree* man is serving out
His *beerees* by the score,
His little boy is folding pans
And laying them in store.



The Brahmini-bull is sauntering past
 The vegetable booths,
 And hov'ring round on every side
 A host of coolie youths.

The fat *halwai* is in his stall
 He is the "*Lala Ji*,"
 A huge *karhai* is simm'ring there
 With *puris* fried in *ghi*.

Next door another's peeping through
 His battlement of sweets
 On which the dust in plenty falls
 As it rises from the streets.



The *kaprawallah's* squatting down
 Beside a bolster high,
 He's flourishing a measuring-yard
 And holding up a tie.

The Gen'ral Merchant's fussing round
 A *memsahib* buying stores,
 "Obulteen" he "got it not,"
 "Sarree, Sir," he roars.

"Cras and Blakewale's Sans I got,
 "Palsan's Caffee best,
 "Tumarow coming my new stack
 "Next month coming rest."





The beggar-man is everywhere,
The beggar-woman too,
At every turn they're by your side
To say "How-do-you-do?"

A *babu* by the water-stand
Indulges in his bath.
A bridegroom in his palanquin
Comes down with his *barath*.

An Indian baja's leading on,
Inspired by Kruschen Salts,
An English air is loudly played—
"The Merry Widow Waltz."

The *ekkawallah's* jogging by
Jingling on he goes,
"*Khabardar*" he loudly yells,
Meaning "Mind your toes."

The picketer is loafing round,
In *khaddar* he is clad,
With great assurance he asserts
That foreign cloth is bad.

The constable is dreamily
Standing at the curb,
Praying that the public peace
Nothing will disturb.



LAWYERS, LITIGANTS AND LIARS

THERE is no more popular resort in India than the law-courts. A Macaulay would say, what the gambling den is to the Chinamen, what the Casino is to the Frenchman, what the bookie's stall is to the Englishman, that and more is the law-court to the average Indian peasant.

It is here that he stakes his fortune whatever little it is, even if it be half-an-acre of land which he mortgages to furnish the wherewithal with which to run his case. It is here that he gambles with fortune and wrestles with the inevitable. It is here that he comes to sacrifice his all—his property, his money, his soul, if necessary, to win some advantage over a rival or wreak his vengeance on an enemy.

He emerges from one court, cuddling to himself a victory gained, only to go into another and lose what he has won and perhaps more in the shape of costs.

And so he goes on *per tot discrimina rerum* till he ruins himself to that extent that he leaves the quiet countryside and joins the hurly burly of City life, sometimes as a time-serving labourer, more often as a *dalal* (or go-between in law-suits) and not infrequently as a sort of sharper who haunts the lowest dens of the city. Litigation becomes a drug to him, a vice and a habit he cannot resist, and he must visit the law-courts at frequent intervals. If not as a *dalal*, he may find a suitable opening for himself as a professional false witness, selling his evidence at so much a lie.

Outside the law-courts is the *Dharamsala* where all and sundry gather, from the innocent-eyed rustic to the bazaar *chandal* and the loafing *luchcha* waiting for the opening of the courts.

This is the emporium of lies: this, the manufactory of fabrications and the public mart of falsehoods turned out to suit the circumstances of any case and sold at bargain prices. All around are seated lawyers engrossed in conversation with their clients, voluminous legal tomes on either side of them and clerks writing briefs in picturesque caligraphy. In and outside the *Dharamsala* rises a babel of voices. Ekkas in their hundreds, tongas in scores and a variety of cars of antediluvian shapes and types are massed together in disordered confusion. Nearby is the *pan beri* shop surrounded by a host of bedraggled people—smoking *biris* and spitting *pan*. It is into this atmosphere that the novice in the art of litigation enters; but he has had much to do ere he has reached this stage. Let us, by a practical example, pursue the tortuous path he has trod.

Ram Bharose and Sri Nath are cultivating their respective fields in village Pirthipur. Their fields adjoin each other. Each wishes to plough his field to the outside limit. The plough of Bharose runs a furrow along the edge which appears to Sri Nath as if it was within his own territory. He protests. There is an altercation and each goes away threatening vengeance on the other after a few well-chosen words of abuse.

It would be too much to follow the movements of both. Let us watch Ram Bharose. He goes to a wiseacre of the village, Balwant Singh, a hero of a hundred legal battles he has fought up to the Hon'ble Board of Revenue and the Hon'ble High Court. He is the "village barrister," the legal middleman, the rustic *dalal*. He gives him all the advice he wants and promises to see a member

of the District Board about it and to convey a *shifarash* to the Magistrate through him. He finally extracts from Ram Bharose the only ten rupees he has in the world.

Ram Bharose then goes to Jagannath, money-lender, and mortgages the whole of his land, with possession of the same, for a hundred rupees. Armed with this money—Ram Bharose now hastens to the police thana 8 miles away, out-stripping Sri Nath who is also on his way there, and records a First Information Report in accordance with the instructions of his adviser, Balwant Singh. He pays the necessary amount to the Head *Muharrir* of the thana to get the report recorded 'nicely.'

Taking the duplicate copy of his report he then hurries on to the wayside Railway Station where he describes to the Station Master the incidents of the case as framed by Balwant Singh. The Station Master then drafts for him a telegram to the District Magistrate which runs as follows: "Sri Nath with fifty men ploughed up my field and blowed me with *lathis*, fistblows and kickblows. Stole oxen and set fire to my house. Life in danger. Send help soon. Ram Bharose, village Pirthipur." The telegram is sent. It costs him about ten rupees but it is to form an excellent piece of evidence when the case comes off.

Ram Bharose then gets back home about midnight after a hard day's work. Next morning early, he opens up the scab of an old sore on his forehead and smears as much of the blood as it will emit on his head. To heighten the colour he will add a little red paint and bandage his head with a dirty rag soaked in the same. Then he hastens to the Sub-Assistant Surgeon at *Tahsil* Headquarters and after payment of a fee of ten rupees obtains a certificate of "a wound $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 1" over the scalp, probably caused by some blunt weapon." Taking this, he now proceeds to headquarters.

He first negotiates the petition-writer to whom he pays three rupees and describes to him the dreadful happenings of which he has come to complain. He nominates as the accused persons Sri Nath, his wife, two sons, three brothers, a brother-in-law, and six friends and ploughmen., thus casting aspersion on any of these should they wish to come forward as defence witnesses for Sri Nath. Affixing an eight-anna court-fee stamp, Ram Bharose goes into the court-room of the Subdivisional Magistrate to file his complaint. He is met at the door by the orderly peon who orders him out with stentorian voice. Ram Bharose slips a rupee into his hand and he is immediately ushered into the presence of the Court Reader, who is commonly known as the *Peshkar Sahib*. Two rupees fall, by accident, from his hands and he informs the Reader that he intends filing a complaint.

The Presiding Magistrate has not yet arrived so accidents will happen.

A City *dalal* has been following him all the while and now the time has come for him to act. "Brother," he says to Ram Bharose "I know the persons who have given you all this trouble. They are great scoundrels and well-known here. I know an excellent lawyer too. He isn't one of these ordinary *mukhtars* but keeps a motor car and the Magistrate is very pleased with him. Whenever he takes up a case in this court he succeeds and your opponents are so *xabardast* (powerful) that he is the only man who could crush them and bring them to justice. It will be some time before the Magistrate arrives. Come with me and have a talk with the Vakil Sahib (the lawyer) about your case." Taking him by the arm he stalks him off to the *Dharamsala*.

While all this has been going on Balwant Singh has not been idle. He has been and seen the District Board member and asked

him to call on the Magistrate and help the cause of Ram Bharose as well as he can. On the promise of receiving Balwant Singh's support at the next elections, the District Board member, Mr. Hanuman Pershad, sallies forth to see the trying Magistrate. He slips a rupee into the hand of the orderly at the Magistrate's bungalow and makes over to him a very dirty-looking visiting card which he has been preserving for many months. On it is typed :

Babu Hanuman Pershad Sahib, Member, District Board.
Son of the late, Babu Soraman Pershad Sahib, receiver of Sanad from the Govt. in 1893.

Parenthetically it should be mentioned that B. Hanuman Pershad has already confided to Balwant Singh that he hates the sight of the Magistrate who is the most unsympathetic officer they have had for many years.

B. Hanuman Pershad is invited in by the Magistrate and there is the exchange of the usual greetings. B. Hanuman Pershad then proceeds to show his father's *sanad* and a few letters he has had from officers acknowledging *dalis*. He then delivers himself of the following oration: "Sir, I have long wanted to call on your honour, having heard of your extreme kindness and courtesy, but owing to my own illness and that of my grand-niece who was narrowly saved from death I was prevented from having this honour and this pleasure before. But I am fortunate that this day I have been blessed by God in being able to set my eyes on your noble countenance. The public is praising you much for your justice and nobility, and praying that you may long remain in this charge to protect its poor peoples." And so on.

The Magistrate has to be a silent listener, suffering the pains of hypocrisy and flattery flung at his face and getting in a vague remark now and again. Finally, when his patience has reached

breaking-point, he says wearily "Well, is there anything I can do for you, Babu Sahib?" and he promptly receives the reply "Oh, no, Sir, nothing. I have only come to pay my respects to your honour and it is your kindness that suggests doing something for me." The usual handshake is performed and just as a parting sort of remark, B. Hanuman Pershad says "Your kindness is great. Please be merciful to the people of Pirthipur in your charge. There is much *zulm* there. One Ram Bharose, who is a very good man, was badly beaten and injured there. His house was burnt and his fields ploughed up. Only an officer like you can do justice there. Sri Nath is a great scoundrel and he is the terror of the place. He says he doesn't care for the Government or—I feel much shame to say so—he says he does not even care for *your* honour. He deserves very severe treatment."

Then he departs after another hand-shake. Balwant Singh is waiting for him outside to receive the latest information., "Well, Babu Sahib, did you have a favourable interview?" he asks excitedly, "You were very long." "Oh, yes" says B. Hanuman Pershad with eclat, "the Magistrate was so pleased to see me that he would not let me go. I have told him everything and he has been properly primed up to deal with Sri Nath. He has promised to give Sri Nath severe punishment, because I recommended it. Now, remember you must help me at the next elections."

Having shaken off B. Hanuman Pershad without expressing a single word of belief or disbelief in the statements which were made to him, the Magistrate prepares to leave for Court, all unaware that Ram Bharose's written complaint is waiting for him there.

Meanwhile Ram Bharose is encountering his lawyer. "This is the Vakil Sahib I recommended" says the *dalal* proudly, "and

there is his motor car." There sits the Vakil—in English garb, jingling a few rupees on his pocket. He is a B.A., LL.B. from the Allahabad University. Besides him are a number of books on law.

"Do you want me to take up a case for you?" he says in disdainful voice to Ram Bharose who is very much impressed. "I really haven't the time for these petty cases. Today I am engaged before the Sessions Judge in a big murder case and I really can't take up your case."

The *dalal* knows his part must be played now and he intervenes. "Oh, yes, Vakil Sahib, do take up this man's case. He is a very poor man and has been horribly badly treated by known scoundrels whom you alone can adequately deal with."

"Very well, as you press it" says the Vakil Sahib who has not had a brief for a month. Turning to his Clerk he says, "Just go over to the Sessions Judge and tell him to excuse me from my case till 2 o'clock as I have this other work. He is a friend of mine and will agree." Ram Bharose opens his eyes wide as he looks with awe and reverence at the great personage.

The clerk knows how to act and, pretending compliance with his master's instructions, slips off to the *pan biri* shop for a few minutes, returning from there with a favourable reply "from the Sessions Judge."



Ram Bharose describes his case as Balwant Singh has instructed him. The Vakil takes up the "Law of Evidence," a comparatively thin book, and says, "Well, as you are a poor man and cannot afford much in the way of fees I can only give you legal advice from this small book. If you could have paid well I could have given you advice from this book." As he spoke the last two words, he softly caressed the Civil Procedure Code—a formidable volume. "Oh, Vakil Sahib," pleads Ram Bharose "please give me advice from the big book. I'll pay you ten rupees instead of five."

The Vakil Sahib curls his lips in contempt and then snaps out "What! Ten rupees? My lowest fee is thirty. Go, if you can't pay at least that." And so on, the bargaining continues and the ultimate price proposed and accepted is Rs. 14-9-6.

From the steps of the court can be heard the raucous voice of the Court orderly shouting out the announcement that all those who would present complaints or applications before the Sub-divisional Magistrate should come and do so. Ram Bharose and his lawyer spring up from their squatting positions and hurry towards the Court. The lawyer enters with the written "complaint" in his hand, Ram Bharose following close behind.

"Your Honour" opens the lawyer, "I wish to present this complaint on behalf of a very poor man who has been shamefully treated. I would request that this complaint be heard as early as possible today as I have three cases in the High Court before His Lordship, the Chief Justice, and have only been able to snatch a few minutes to file this."

The Magistrate orders the statement to be recorded immediately. Ram Bharose is given the oath. "Say after me" orders the Court Orderly "In the name of Parmeshwar I shall tell the

truth". Ram Bharose raises his eyes heavenwards and says "Parmeshwar Himself is present before me in the shape of the Magistrate. In the name of Parmeshwar, in the name of Mother Ganges, in the name of all I hold dear, my son, my children, I shall tell the truth. I never have lied; never could lie."

"That's enough" says the Orderly. "Now what have you got to say?" queries the Magistrate.

Ram Bharose commences. "Two days ago about mid-day I took my plough to my field in Pirthipur. There I saw Sri Nath ploughing the field up. I folded my hands to him and told him this was not the right thing to do when we were living under the benign rule of the British Government, but he, being a known scoundrel and very daring, said he did not care for any authority. When I told him I would make a complaint he attacked me shouting to others who were his friends to come and beat me. On approaching me, he slapped me so hard that I fainted. My brother came up to rescue me by pleading and he too was surrounded and beaten. When I came to my senses again I found that Sri Nath's wife was bringing a *lathi* to Sri Nath's brother and Sri Nath's sons were holding one hand each of mine. Sri Nath's brother-in-law was sitting on my chest. Another brother picked up the *lathi* and struck me over the head causing this wound. Meanwhile Sri Nath's friends and servants (all named) loosed my bulls and took away my plough. Sri Nath then tied me up and all of them took me and my brother to my house which they burnt before our eyes. I sent a telegram to the District Magistrate about this and also reported it to the Police. The doctor examined me. Here is his certificate and my report to the Police both of which are correct."

The first hearing is over. Now Ram Bharose starts exercising his mind as to whom he should pick up as witnesses. Balwant Singh will make a good eye-witness. His brother another. For a third witness he turns to the *dalal*, who goes off for a minute and returns with a "witness" who asks two rupees as his fee. Finally, his fees are fixed at one rupee and four annas, and he comes into court with the name of God on his lips, saying that he happened to be going on that date to a place just beyond Pirthipur to buy a bull, when, in passing, he heard a noise and running to the spot he saw the whole incident. Asked whether he purchased the bull ultimately, he replies "No, the man from whom I was going to buy it had gone away to the bazaar and as it was getting late I returned home."

With the aid of all these helpers Ram Bharose finally wins his case and Sri Nath is sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

Balwant Singh immediately takes over the rest of Ram Bharose's money as a reward and for payment of 'the gift of rejoicing' to the *dalal* and the lawyer. Ram Bharose returns to his village exulting. His money is gone, his fields are lost to him, but he is happy that an enemy has been punished. His wife's jewellery will now be sold and the proceeds will supply a few *chappattis* a day for the family to live on.

Before the end of the month he receives notice from the Sessions Court that an appeal has been filed by Sri Nath. Ram Bharose sells his only bull and with the 50 rupees thus acquired, arrives at his former lawyer's place. The lawyer takes up the case on appeal for a further payment, this time of Rs. 30. The appeal is heard. Sri Nath is acquitted.

By the time Ram Bharose returns to his village, the balance of his 50 rupees is almost expended. A few rupees remain and with it the family ekes out an existence for a few days.

Finally he is forced by penury to approach again the money-lender Jagannath, for a small loan and another loan and so on. Ram Bharose is ruined for ever, a slave of Jagannath, a neglected plaything of Balwant Singh, a pawn of the *dalal*, a willing sacrifice on the altar of Lawyers, Litigants and Liars.

THE OFFICE CLERK

[UNLIKE the Village Blacksmith, the office clerk does not sit under a spreading chestnut-tree, but spread all around him are brown-papered files and volumes of written matter. You will usually find him behind a large pair of brass-rimmed spectacles and a pretty substantial growth of hair. He has the physique of a Samson with galloping consumption, an unperturbed countenance, and knees which vibrate rapidly while he sits in his office-chair. His movement is slow, and he usually dips his pen deep into the inkpot when he prepares to write. During the pauses in his work—and there are many such pauses—his pen is buried into the hair that overlaps his ears. He is a silent man; and, except for an occasional grunt and not unoften a vocal yawn, he makes little noise. He is usually very precise and exact. For example, if he refers to a soldier, he will always say "a military soldier," or, if to a boatman, "a naval sailor." Chief amongst his friends is the Licensed Medical Practitioner not because he receives medical advice or treatment from him, as he prefers the Bard, but because, in the event of his needing leave, he will require a proper medical certificate. In no branch of activity does the office clerk excel himself more than in drafting an application for leave on the basis of a medical certificate. He usually mentions in the body of the application full details of his ailments, and adds the names of a few diseases which are not mentioned in the certificate, but which the L.M.P. "told" him about. The verses below exemplify the type of application he submits.]

RESPECTED Sir, I beg to say
 I have a headache pain to-day.
 I have the honour to enclose
 A paper which quite clearly shows
 The doctor thinks my case is grave
 And "Rest" alone my life will save.
 The doctor is an L.M.P.
 Great his fame and great his fee,
 He states I've got Dyspepsia,
 Neuritis, and Insomnia,
 Galloping Consumption too,
 Rheumatism, Spleen, and Sprue,
 Gall-stones in incipient stage,
 See doctor's book on sixtieth page,
 Palpitations of the heart,
 Laryngitis just will start.
 Most Honoured Sir, please grant me leave;
 Pray don't suspect that I deceive.
 By Fundamental Rules I'm due
 Ten days, no matter how you view
 The new Amendment just received,
 I pray I won't be disbelieved;
 But, if Your Honour is in doubt
 That I have pains far worse than gout,
 Peruse my service-book and see
 "A most pains-taking man is he."
 For twenty days I've left my food,
 My "children's" cry in sorry mood,
 Unconscious through the nights I lie,
 Thinking "Surely I will die."
 Please kindly, Sir, grant me this boon,
 To healthify myself, and soon

I'll pray for your longevity
I have the honour, Sir, to be
Yours humbly and obediently
Charu Charan Chatterji,
"Entrance passed" and "F.A. fail,"
Clerk, on incremental scale,
Dated District Machharpur,
Tenth September, Thirty-four.



"THE MAN EATING TIGER OF KALAGOAN"

"I THINK my experience beats that," said the old Colonel, just as I had finished relating to him an incident in which I was attacked and nearly killed by a tiger. "It is not that I wish to 'top' your story", he added "but as you have described this incident my thoughts go back to the days of my youth and the experience has left such an impression on my mind that I feel I must recount it. Well, it was only a year or two after I came out to this country to join an Indian Regiment that a fellow, by the name of Bickers, one of my brother officers, and I decided to take a month's leave together and spend it in Mussoorie.

We looked forward to the gaiety of the place and all the fun we were going to have. We had hardly been up two days when someone mentioned at our hotel that a 'proclaimed' man-eating tiger had succeeded in making its sixteenth human kill at a spot about thirty miles away.

The very thought of going after it thrilled us as we looked towards the blue hills and valleys which slept in the distance. Somewhere in those folds on folds of hills stalked this man-eater which had baffled so many experienced shikaris, who had spent weeks in trying to exterminate this scourge of humanity. Residents of Mussoorie told us that this tiger was known as 'Lumsden's folly' and the story went that a certain Colonel Lumsden had wounded the animal and since it had got away, it had taken to man-eating.

The extraordinary part was that, barring one man, it had devoured only women, possibly because they were easier prey or

perhaps because they were more tender and less sinewy. Anyhow, everybody we met spurned the idea that two inexperienced shikaris like ourselves would succeed in killing it. But the vanity of youth is such that this did not deter us. Indeed it made us all the more determined to see the business through.

After a few preliminary arrangements, we proceeded, mounted on two 'nags' of the hill variety—sturdy little ponies they were too. I need not describe the journey. The country was extremely wild once we were seven or eight miles out and we met not a living soul. Solitude brooded over these mountains and held us in its embrace. It was late in the evening when we arrived at our destination—a lonely Forest bungalow which the Forest Department had courteously permitted us to use.

The news of our arrival spread quickly for the few people in this part—half a dozen shanties in all constituted the village—knew that we had come to slay the man-eater.

The Forest Guard and the bungalow *Chaukidar* were the first to greet us. There was something in the expression of the Forest Guard which neither of us liked. He had a supercilious smile which particularly provoked us, for we took it he was, in his heart, sneering at the idea of two youngsters like ourselves attempting to achieve what other reputable big game hunters had failed to accomplish.

The name of the *Chaukidar* was Sher Singh. He was a fairly big and heavily built man and his name thoroughly suited him. It was obvious from the very look on the man's face that he did not know what fear meant, and we felt a certain assurance that, with his help, we would get this tiger somehow. He told us that on one occasion he had offered himself as a living human 'kill' but to his great good fortune the tiger did not turn up that night.

We felt sure he was not bragging and little did we realise then how soon we would have to put him to the test in this very manner. However, he had no love for the Forest Guard and whispered to us confidentially that if we took the advice or help of this man we would certainly be side-tracked by him instead of being helped. The reason he gave took a fair amount of believing, but it was not altogether improbable. Sher Singh strongly suspected the theForest Guard of profitting on the 'kills' of the tiger by divesting the victims of all their jewellery and ornaments before reporting the incident. Naturally he had the best opportunity of doing this as the tiger was operating within the Forest block which was in his charge and he would be the first to discover the corpses. However, this was rather a gruesome detail which did not interest us very much and it was not impossible that Sher Singh had some private grudge against him.

For Sher Singh's satisfaction, however, we promised we would not take the Forest Guard's advice and would place ourselves entirely in the former's hands.

That afternoon we proceeded to the spot, which was about two miles away from the bungalow and at the very bottom of the valley. The ground on which we softly trod was covered with damp, dark mould and on every side was thick undergrowth.

We took Sher Singh with us, leaving the Forest Guard behind with the excuse that it was necessary for him to watch the bungalow in Sher Singh's absence. It did not take the powerful and agile Sher Singh much time to rig up a *machan* for us, aided as he was with a sharp and heavy hatchet.

It was 4 o'clock when we took our places in the *machan*. Sher Singh drew the corpse within sight of us and departed with only his hatchet on his shoulder. For the first time we saw a look

of what seemed to us fear flash across his face. But it was only for a moment and his features set again. There lay the corpse before us—a horrible spectacle, all mangled and torn, the breasts taken entirely off, the head almost completely severed from the body.

The hours passed. We strained our ears to listen to the approach of this marauder of the jungles.

Dusk came. Gradually the outline of the corpse became indistinct and now only the pale drawn upturned face of the woman was discernible in the failing light: then darkness. Silence—unbroken silence—prevailed. It must have been about 10 o'clock when a slight rustle of leaves could be heard along the valley. Nearer and nearer it came, and now we could hear a noise of tearing at the corpse.

The supreme moment had arrived. I nudged Bickers and noiselessly presented my rifle. Then I pressed the button of my electric torch. There, in the full glare of the light, crouched a jackal besides the corpse! I could not resist an audible and very expressive word—the commonest in the English language! However, it relieved our feelings, and switching off my torch, we resumed our silent vigil.

Time passed slowly. After many hours of watchful waiting, a soft breeze with a peculiar freshness suddenly pervaded the *machan*. Like a ghost out of the night the corpse gradually started taking shape again.

It was dawn. The birds of the forest commenced to sing their morning song and twittered in every tree. Half-an-hour later we heard a soft tread behind us. Sher Singh appeared, looking dreadfully disappointed.

'No luck, *Sahib*' he said, 'Never mind we must think of more attractive methods today.' 'Well, if you don't, no *baksheesh* for you, old man,' I replied rather splenetically. '*Sahib*,' replied Sher Singh, 'this is an old and very cunning animal. Those who have seen him say his skin is wrinkled with age, his eyes are deep-set and he walks most cautiously through the forest, unlike a young animal which cannot distinguish between the shikari and the harmless wood-cutter.'

Bickers now tried to get rid of some of his spleen and muttered in very bad Hindustani 'Well, does all that mean we have spent a fruitless night out of bed and there is really no hope of getting the tiger?' Sher Singh understood the purport of Bickers' remark even if he did not understand every single word.

"No, no *Sahib*," He replied with animation and emphasis, "Don't give up hope so soon. You are going to get that tiger and I shall see that you do. He must come back sometime." Neither of us replied. We were thinking more of the Forest Bungalow and *chota hazzri* and a bath. After a moment Sher Singh said reflectively and slowly, "How would it do, *Sahib*, if I stood under the tree as a live 'kill' to attract the tiger? But you must shoot quick and straight, *Sahib*, and save me if it attacks. I have no one in the world to mourn my loss even if I am killed. But if I live through, whether the tiger comes or not, I want you to promise me a reward of Rs. 200."

The offer was so calmly made that we could not but admire him for his cool courage. That he meant what he said was without question.

"Well, Sher Singh," I said "you are undoubtedly the bravest man I have ever seen. We shall take you at your word and accept

your offer. We shall shoot quick and true no sooner the tiger attacks you. But you take the risk. We can only promise to do our best."

"Done! *Sahib*" he said with resolution in his voice. For the rest of the journey Bickers and I talked of Sher Singh's self-sacrificing offer and our feelings were tense with the thought of his utter and splendid disregard of danger.

Then, Bickers spoke. "Sher Singh," he said kindly, "how is it you have no one in the world? Surely you have some relatives somewhere?" "No one that I know of," said Sher Singh quietly and thoughtfully, "My father and mother came from Nepal and settled here. I was their only child and was born here. I got married two years ago and last year my wife was killed." After a pause and a deep sigh, in which all his features seemed to undergo a change, he added "by this very tiger. Are you surprised, *Sahib*, that I am prepared to do anything to get him killed? All her jewellery too was taken off her body and I strongly suspect this was done by the Forest Guard whom I hate for this very reason."

The whole thing was clear now to our minds. Poor Sher Singh! No wonder he was prepared to do all in his power to have this tiger shot, no wonder he hated the Forest Guard, no wonder his set features underwent a change when he drew the corpse of the woman before the *machan*!

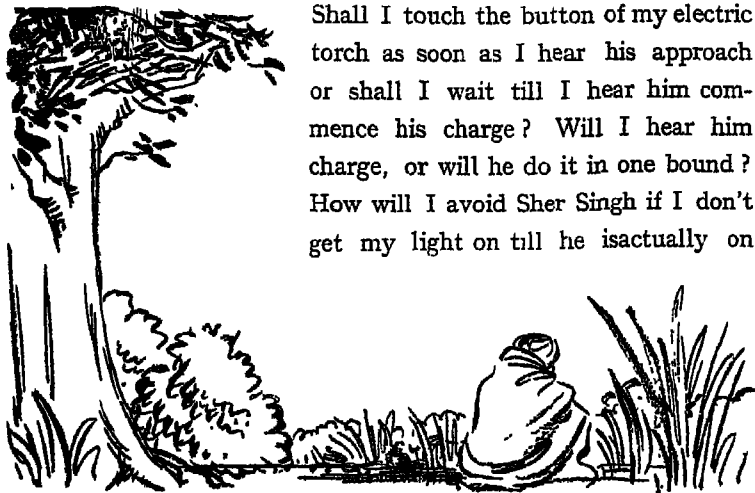
That evening Bickers had developed a high temperature and I proposed putting off the matter but Sher Singh insisted that I should go alone. So to the *machan* I went.

Bickers and I had put our resources together and I handed over 200 rupees in notes to Sher Singh. Wrapped in a blanket, Sher Singh sat besides the corpse with his back turned towards it.

I was trembling with excitement, but Sher Singh had a look of complete resignation on his face. He sat absolutely still—statuelike—staring straight ahead of him. Now and again I thought I saw a tremor go through his frame. The evening shadows gathered and enwrapped the solemn scene in a mantle of haziness. Then once again darkness—pitch blackness—enveloped us. The silence was broken only by the sighing sound of the mountain stream which hissed its way through the luxuriant valley.

The strain on my nerves was tremendous, the ever expectant wait was dreadful and sometimes I felt I could shriek out into the night. But I mentally reprimanded myself as I thought how much more nerve-wracking was the position of Sher Singh. The weight of responsibility which lay on my shoulders to save a life that was offering itself up a martyr to the memory of his wife, seemed too much to bear. At times I felt I would rather the tiger did not appear. If he does, will I be able to shoot in time?

Shall I touch the button of my electric torch as soon as I hear his approach or shall I wait till I hear him commence his charge? Will I hear him charge, or will he do it in one bound? How will I avoid Sher Singh if I don't get my light on till he is actually on



his victim? These, and a thousand other questioning thoughts, galloped through my mind and tortured my soul in those perilous hours of trial and patience and horror. They repeated themselves over and over again in my mind till I felt confused, and mentally and bodily ill. But I grit my teeth and tried to stick it. I did.

And as morning broke, I heaved a sigh of relief and felt truly thankful that the night had passed without incident. Sher Singh sat there in exactly the same position as he was the previous evening, still staring in front of him with a fixed and glazed look in his eyes which now seemed to have sunk deep into his head. I called to him. He turned with a start, then stretched himself and answered hoarsely, "Hai! Hai! *Sahib*, once again the cunning brute has evaded us. But I beg of you not to get disheartened. We shall get him yet. We must get him. If only you could see him once, you would be convinced that I am not deceiving you and you would determine not to leave this place till you get him."

"No! No! Sher Singh, I've had enough of this. I could not possibly undergo the strain of last night again. It is no fun shooting under conditions like these. I'm off back to Mussoorie to-day." I felt utterly disconsolate at the moment as I thought how people would laugh Bickers and myself to scorn when we returned to Mussoorie.

We walked on in silence for about half-a-mile when Sher Singh, who was carrying his blanket wrapped up in a bundle on his back and his hatchet on his shoulder, said "*Sahib*, this tiger has been seen in that valley there once before and if you will climb a tree here and wait I shall go and have a look. There are some rocks there which are believed to form his den. I would rather you did not approach it as it would be a most dangerous thing

the tiger but it actually died in the forest a day after. I found the carcass which I skinned, resolving to use it to murder my wife and her seducer in this garb. I killed them both with my hatchet when they were out in the forest. Since then I took a hatred to all women and could not resist killing any I met as I prowled around in this skin. My father told me my name was Sher Singh and I should be as brave as a tiger, but I have also been as cruel as one."

A paroxysm of pain prevented him from speaking for a moment and then he went on almost inaudibly. "*Sahib*, I charged the Forest Guard falsely, because I thought he had been here long enough to suspect me and I wanted him transferred. It is I who stole all the ornaments *Sahib*, my last confession is that I wanted to make money off you, as I have done with other *Sahibs*, by offering myself as a human 'kill.' I thought just now that if I could insure my safety by relieving you of your rifle and then appear before you in the form of a tiger, you would give me another two hundred rupees to sit out. But I never expected the other *Sahib* to arrive. Oh! *Sahib*, forgive me! If you forgive me perhaps God will. The jewellery is all in that cave there which is my 'den.' Give it—"

He fell back. The man—eating 'tiger' of Kalagaon was no more.

CREDIT AND DISCREDIT

IF YOU want to cut a dash
And you haven't any cash,
Just sign !

If you want a little "splash,"
Or you need a "haberdash,"
Just sign !

If the ten-per-centum "slash"
Makes you feel a little rash,
Just sign !

If you want a little mash
Or a matrimonial hash,
Just sign !

If you want to buy some trash,
A dress, a suit, a sash,
Just sign !

If you have a motor smash,
Or your house is burnt to ash,
Just sign !

If you fear the lawyer's lash,
Don't feel at all abash,
Just sign !

If in court you have a clash,
And the teeth judicial gnash,
Just sign !

Then scamper like a flash,
If you're caught because you crash,
Resign !



THE BIRTH OF A NEW SECT

FEW people are aware of the existence of that small but important sect. in India known as the Sadhs. Fewer still are aware of the romance attached to the origin of this sect.

There are only a few thousands of this sect and most of them are congregated in the district of Farrukhabad in the United Provinces. Their wealth per head, I should imagine, exceeds that of any community in India and their profession is almost entirely concerned with imprinting cloth in variegated colours and designs. America and England have both offered them a tremendous market for their wares and money has come pouring into the hands of this community for their handiwork.

But all the brilliance of this wonderful rise to affluence pales into insignificance before the much more brilliant romance which encompasses their birth and origin as a sect outside the domain of Hinduism or Mohammedism.

They worship 'the one true god' and they bow their heads to no man, whether he be the Governor of the province or the Viceroy himself. Their salutation consists of holding up both hands vertically, palms facing the front.

These characteristics have a significance which only the history of their origin can explain. I have not found that history recorded in any book but I shall repeat it as it exists on the lips of those who live in Northern India, and continue the oral tradition.

Not so many years ago, perhaps less than a century, there lived a much respected *Kalwar* (grocer) family in the city of Farrukhabad. The eldest daughter was young and beautiful. A non-caste Hindu servant of the household fell desperately in love with her, and try as he would he could not suppress the great passion which burned within his soul for this attractive girl. He tried to reason with himself as to the utter impossibility of any union between a man in his menial position and a girl of so gentle a family. He was painfully conscious of the disparity in caste which existed between him and the woman for whom his heart craved; but in spite of all this, one day, caught up in a whirl-wind of desire, he suddenly seized the idol of his life in his arms and poured out to her in impassioned words all the love that was beating in his heart and setting his soul on fire. This delicate girl, amazed at his extraordinary behaviour, with a superhuman power with which she suddenly became vested, wrenched herself away and reprimanded him severely for the insult which had thus been inflicted on her by a despicable servant.

Defeated, cowed and heart-broken, the servant withdrew. With a last long look at her, he turned away and proceeded to the banks of the Ganges resolved to spend the rest of his life in a attempt to find God as his consoler. There he sat week by week, month by month and year after year, dressed only in a loin cloth and fed at intervals by those who cared to give a poor beggar alms. The hair of his head grew long and matted and his full beard gave him a venerable appearance; but yet he was a moncaste Hindu and, as such, could not obtain that degree of reverence accorded to the usual Sadhu Maharaj.

He struggled to find his consolation in God; but in spite of all his asceticism, the vision of his beloved *Kalwar* girl came back to him and haunted him by day and by night. In desperation.



one day, he decided to go back and find her, only to see her once again. When he arrived at her father's home, he found that she had been married and had left it. He traced her to her husband's home and sat outside her door patiently, waiting for her to pass so that he might see her once more.

He had not long to wait. She had espied from her window, what appeared to her to be a Sadhu Maharaj, sitting at her door step for alms and true to her religious instincts, she hastened out to give him what she could of charity. Behind his unkempt hair and heavy beard, she did not recognise her one-time lover. To her he was just a Sadhu Maharaj and she performed her sacred duty, by giving him alms. Through the blazing sun of the day, through the drenching burst of the monsoons and through the long silent nights, the poor mendicant sat there week after week, enduring hardships and living only for a glance each day at the idol of his heart.

At length, on one occasion, when giving him alms the girl suddenly found the eyes of the Sadhu looking at her so piercingly that her own gaze got transfixed on him. She had seen those eyes somewhere before. Only once in her life she had seen such burning passion radiate from the windows of a soul, and that was in the eyes of her quondam servant.

Gazing at him fixedly, realisation dawned on her and she knew she was in the presence of her one-time lover. She attempted to flee, but a supernatural power seemed to hold her where she stood. And then he spoke, "I know you, recognise me" he said, "I have tried to forget you and to seek my consolation in God

but I have failed. Nothing seems to be capable, of breaking the chain which binds my soul to yours." And the earnest brown eyes filled with tears. With sudden resolution, the girl replied, "Had you but loved God with the devotion that you have loved me, you would have been a great Sashu to-day. Go back to mother Ganges and try again, resolving never to bow your head to humanity." Saying this, the girl seemed to be suddenly released from the shackles that bound her to that spot and she ran inside. At that moment, the fire in the mendicant's soul burnt out all the dross that was there. His earthly romance had ended for ever and his heavenly romance had commenced at the dictate of this little woman.

With fresh resolution he rose and with firm step he proceeded back to the sands of the Ganges bed, there to spend the rest of his life seeking God only and bowing neither his head nor his spirit to any man or woman.

People of all sects, impressed by his devotion and his creed gradually gathered around him and became his disciples. For a profession they took to printing cloth; which has to-day been established as one of the most lucrative employments in the Indian market.

This is the story of the origin of the Sadhs as it was told to me.

AN ADDRESS TO A MILESTONE

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen ?
Standing in raiment so white and so clean,
Here in thy muteness as Time rolls on
And the scenes that were have passed and gone.

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen ?
Here by the corn-fields' waving green,
Swept by the summer's scorching blast,
By gale and dust-storm blowing fast.

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen
Of potentate and palanquin
Passing in splendour on Royalty's way
In the shadows of evening : in the blaze of day ?

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen
Of armies which, in martial mien,
Have thundered by this metalled road
With armaments which battles bode ?

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen ?
Dumb Witness of days that have been,
Speak of the Thags who lay in wait,
Murd'ring the lonely : gambling with Fate.

Sentinel of the Road ! What hast thou seen
Of chariots bright with silver sheen,
Of Mela crowds and jocund throng,
And mendicants who passed along ?

Sentinel of the Road! What hast thou seen?
Speak of the things I'm yearning to glean.
Thy silence break for one brief hour
And stir my fancy with thy power.

Sentinel of the Road! Sublime, serene!
No speech is thine, but yet, I ween,
I hear thee as in whisp'rings
On wild Imagination's wings.

* * *

Sentinel of the Road! I've heard! I've seen!
I've thrilled with every passing scene,
Here camel-cart, there cavalcade,
That surging come and gently fade.

Sentinel of the Road! On thee I lean—
Just you and I with none between.
I've read thy thoughts, lone sentinel,
I'll hie me on, and so "Farewell!"

TACT

TACT is a magic word in official circles. Careers are made and careers are ruined on the anvil of tact.

Tact is a synonym for judicious lying both in speech and action. The dictionary meaning of the word which has been delicately stated as adroitness in managing the feelings of persons dealt with has, in practice, crystallized into clever feigning with a view to attain one's object.

For example, if the biggest rogue in the city started exercising an evil influence over the people which resulted in a riot, I would as a tactful officer, send for him, receive him politely and tell him that I so much appreciated the great influence he wielded over his fellow-men that I would get him appointed a special policeman. He goes away happy that he has succeeded in deceiving me as to his real feelings and I sit back in my office chair rejoicing that I have tied him hand and foot to the law and placed heavily on him the responsibility for any further breach of the peace that may occur in his locality. No further disturbance consequently occurs and I gain the reputation of being a most tactful officer.

Again, if some youthful firebrand in the countryside, proudly possessing all the wisdom which a School-Leaving Certificate implies, indulges in the popular game of lecturing innocent rustics about the injustice of a Satanic Government, I send for him, commend his great learning and noble purpose, and promptly get him appointed the *Sarpanch* or head of the village Panchayat. I know full well that the Panchayat is torn by dissensions between

various parties, and that the noblest soul on earth would not retain the position with either popularity or credit for a single day. But the means are excellent for discrediting this inexperienced youth and I adopt them.

The flattered coxcomb greedily grasps at the position, his heart beating with pride that fear of his ability to control the populace has made me bow my head before him. In rather an insolent manner, he leaves the room. I light another cigarette and smile to myself.

With a week, complaints came pouring in anonymously and otherwise, of the utter injustice of the *Sarpanch*, his incompetence, his villainy, his unpopularity.

I send for him, take his explanation, pass an order for his removal and order him to leave the room, with a threat that he will be locked up, if he does not behave himself in future.

His influence is gone, his reputation is ruined, and he becomes an easy victim in my hands in case necessity should arise in future to restrain him.

The trick is done and the egg in the hat is tact.

But tact has another phase, linked with opportunism. The most brilliant example I know of this is connected with my old friend, the late Mr. Akbar Ali, one time Special Manager of the Court of Wards at Gorakhpur.

It was an election meeting for membership of the Legislative Council. The venue was Majhauili, the headquarters of the premier potentate in this part of the province. The late Raja was known as the "King-maker." After his death, there being no heir, the Estate was managed by Government, with Mr. Akbar Ali as their special representative.

The persons who contested the seat were two Rajas of considerable importance in that part, namely the Raja of Tamkohi and the Raja of Padrauma. The former had been known to the late Raja of Majhauri as a boy. His possessions extended over thousands of acres of the richest arable land in these parts. A splendid palace, a small zoo of his own, and an excellent Mews which stabled fifty horses of the finest blood, to say nothing of a fleet of motor-cars and a troop of elephants.

The Raja of Padrauma, whose grandfather had been created a Raja by the "King-maker" of Majhauri, though he had less land than the Raja of Tamkohi, had amassed considerable wealth and was the possessor of one of the largest Sugar factories in Northern India.

Excitement ran high as thousands of cultivators of the Majhauri Raj gathered at the place of meeting.

It was a gorgeous spectacle to see these two Rajas approaching the vast *Pandal* where the meeting was to be held.

They were severally to address the meeting and put forth their respective claims to the votes of the cultivators of the Majhauri Raj.

The Collector of the district was to preside at the meeting and the two Rajas were to sit one on either side of him.

The Rajas took their respective seats, the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting arrived and Mr. Akbar Ali, stood anxiously tapping his hat, waiting for the arrival of the Collector.

Five minutes passed, ten minutes, fifteen minutes and the village postal-peon dashed up to Mr. Akbar Ali with a telegram.

Mr. Akbar Ali paled as he read the communication. It was from the Collector. Owing to extremely urgent business he could not attend the meeting. Mr. Akbar Ali hurried towards me and showing me the telegram asked what should be done in the circumstances.

I told him the only thing to be done was for him to preside himself, but in his characteristically modest way, he replied, "But that is impossible. How can I presume to take the chair, when people of such premier importance as these two Rajas are going to sit on either side of me."

"Then ask one of them to preside." I said rather foolishly to which I received the natural reply that apart from the invidious nature of such a selection it would be tantamount to indicating to the Majhauili cultivators that the Majhauili Raj favoured the particular Raja so selected.

All of a sudden, a gleam of light spread over Mr. Akbar Ali's face: a brilliant thought had seized him and without another word, he dashed off to put his scheme into effect, whilst I was still wondering how he was going to solve a problem which seemed to offer no practical solution without creating embarrassment to someone or other.

But I was not long in doubt. Mr. Akbar Ali now stepped boldly on to the dais. There was something in his hand and before I could discover what that thing was, he proceeded to address the meeting.

"Raja Sahibs and Peasants of the Majhauili Raj" he commenced, "It is a happy occasion to-day that two great Rajas who were loved so much by and owed so much to our late lamented Raja Sahib of Majhauili should have met together on a common platform to address his beloved tenants."

"It is impossible that his spirit is not present here. He surely will guide our words and decision to-day and in token of our belief that his spirit prevails here, I ask him to preside at this meeting. To keep ourselves reminded that he is here in spirit and in deed, I place his photograph on the president's chair and ask you to accord your approval to this election."

Saying this he stepped forward, with decision, towards the central chair and placed a large photograph of the late Raja of Majhauuli upon it.

The enthusiasm of the crowd was unbounded and in a deafening chorus they accorded their approval to Mr. Akbar Ali's action.

This was the acme of tact.



A TRIBUTE TO THE BRAVE

[This piece was written many years ago at the time of the incident mentioned therein. The justification for its inclusion now is that the Everest Expedition of 1933 found some traces of Mallory and Irvine whose deeds can never be forgotten.]

TWO specks move slowly up the whited slope
Of snow-clad Everest's giddy height ;
As in the darkness of the night they grope,
And yet 'tis morning crystal bright.

We see you climbing breathlessly
Bold Irvine ! Brave Mallory !
Your names will live in memory :
Old England is proud of you !

'Tis near the summit they are marching on,
Their goal, "the top" or snow-bound grave.
Sweeps then a blizzard and from sight they've gone,
Gone to the destiny of the brave.

We know you battled manfully,
Brave Irvine ! Bold Mallory !
Your deeds we'll write in history :
The Nation's applauding you !

Beat back and say the game was played and lost ?
Not they—too steel their bravery !
They'd carry on, regardless of the cost :
O'er flesh the spirit's victory.

We know you struggled desp'rately,
Bold Irvine! Brave Mallory!
Lives your example deathlessly:
All mankind's acclaiming you!

Some day we'll find your lonely resting-place
Where you lay down in deathful sleep:
Some day, perhaps, we'll see you face to face,
Where you your silent vigils keep.

We know you died unflinchingly,
Brave Irvine! Bold Mallory!
Sweet Peace be yours eternally,
And heav'nly voices welcome you!

THE WIZARD

IN an obscure corner of the city known as Surajkund lives the wizard of Allahabad. I first came into contact with him five years ago and was struck even more by his prescience than his miraculous powers of healing.

It was a hot summer night with the full moon shedding its pale radiance over the plains of Northern India. Our beds were glistening white with reflected moonlight, as we proceeded to retire for the night.

Suddenly, the calm still atmosphere was rent by a terrible shriek of pain followed by a succession of agonised cries. It was my young Alsatian dog and I recognised the voice.

I hastened to the spot behind the bungalow and in the shade of the guava tree near the cook-house, there was the poor dog in a shallow ditch apparently pinned to the ground and writhing in agony. My *khansama* had rushed out with a lantern which he was holding over the dog and he hastily explained to me that he had seen the dog rush in that direction and trip into the ditch. The explanation seemed feasible though so shallow a ditch did appear but a small obstacle to a dog.

Obviously the dog had sprained its shoulder very badly and picking up the poor animal I brought it to my bedside and rendered first aid. But all to no purpose, the dog continued to whine pitifully through the night.

For three days, I applied all the lineaments I could find. When these failed, I took the poor sufferer to the Municipal Veteri-

nary Hospital, where the doctor told me it was a displacement of the muscle which would require an operation but that this would be risky in the prevailing hot weather. Disappointed, I took the dog home again and after another week of unsuccessful personal ministrations, decided to show it to the Military Vet. He differed with the diagnosis of the Municipal Surgeon and opined that it was a fracture of the shoulder-blade, which it was impossible to rectify now a fortnight after the accident.

A week later, I asked a friend who knew more of dogs and their ailments than any other person I knew and he differed with both the Vets. He was of opinion that it was merely a serious sprain which, with neglect, had now become a permanent cause of lameness that would last throughout the dog's life.

When my friend had gone, my wife and I were sadly discussing the tragedy of this incident, my *Khidmatgar* came in and suggested that if we had no objection, we should send for one Jaganath Ahir of Surajkund who had acquired a great reputation as a bonesetter. He added that Jaganath was the milk supplier of the Convent !

With complete indifference in my voice, I said, " Very well bring him along."

" Oh no, *Huzoor*," said the *khidmatgar*," "He wont come at my request. He never goes to any *Sahib's* place, unless they send a motor-car for him."

" Well, he is not going to have mine " I said, emphatically. My wife's faith was however, greater than mine and she persuaded me to write to a local *Rais* to send his car for the great Jaganath.

Next morning at 7 A.M. we heard the buzz of a car outside and Jaganath was announced. I was surprised on going



out to see this reputable bonesetter. He was a tall, gaunt, fair man of advanced age, dressed only in a loincloth and gold earrings.

I cannot say I was particularly impressed by him, except perhaps by his comparative nakedness and his obvious simplicity. He insisted on being taken to the spot where the accident occurred; and so there we went. I gave him the details of the incident and showed him the ditch. After hearing me out, he looked mildly at the *Khansama* and said, "So you, *khansamaji*, saw the dog trip and fall into the ditch." The *khansama* seemed to be rather agitated and was struggling to say, 'Yes,' when suddenly old Jaganath changed his expression. Looking impressively at the cook, he pointed a long accusing finger at him and said with a decided air, "You threw a stone at this poor dog, and felled it. Now you dare to lie about it."

Every body was struck dumb at the unerring precision with which the accusation was made and the *khansama* fell on his face at Jaganath's feet and cried, "You are a *Daota* (god). You have spoken the truth, I did not have the courage to confess it before as I was afraid of the anger of the *Sahib*. But I made a mistake. I thought at night that this was a Pariah dog and I flung a stone at it as hard as I could. I did not realise my mistakes till it was too late. I was so sorry that I could have cut my hands off for this most regrettable mistake.

Jaganath's eyes again resumed their natural mildness of expression, and he said sympathetically, "Don't worry it will be quite all right."

Then turning to me? Jaganath added, "*Huzoor*, if you will spend a little money this dog will be cured in three days." The mention of money in advance made me immediately suspicious, and I replied sharply, "Don't talk about money just now: cure my dog in a month if you like, and I shall give you fifty rupees as a reward."

The old man raised his hands in horror and exclaimed resentfully, "Reward! Never mention the word 'reward' to me *Sahib*, If I were to take a pice as reward from any body, my power would instantly forsake me." All I want you to do is to buy the medicines and that will be nine pice." I apologized and laughed thinking he had been facetious in the estimate of the cost of medicines. But I was to be disillusioned. He was never more serious in his life, and the next moment, he was dictating the names of six herbs to my orderly the cost of each being half a pice! He directed that these herbs should be mixed with water and made into a lape which should be applied for half an hour only each day on the dog's injured shoulder.

His instructions were strictly followed. The first day the pain was gone; the second, the foot touched the ground, and on the third day the dog was racing about the compound without the slightest semblance of a limp. That dog is with me still and has never through the years that have rolled by since then, had a recrudescence of the pain, nor a return of the limp.

The wizard still carries on his trade as a milk purveyor and still resides in his hovel at Surajkund, using his mystic power as occasion offers, to relieve suffering and never a penny of remuneration does he take, but his motor drive he must have and needless to add, he gets it.

THE SEAPLANE

[Recollections of the arrival of the first seaplane to visit Allahabad, piloted by Sir Alan Cobham.]

IT swept through the air like a falcon of old
It gleamed in the sunlight with silver and gold,

It had travell'd o'er desert and mountain and sea :
And now it sped grandly o'er grey Ganga Ji.

It soared o'er the Jumna and circled the Fort,
It dipp'd o'er its ramparts in search of the port :

The buzz of its engines now deafened the ear
As it dived, and the crowd gave a thund'ring cheer :

Then, up, in its flight it ascended again
And drifted away o'er the far-distant plain ;

But back, like a wasp, it angrily flew :
It shot through the sky like a bolt from the blue.

Then down, to the river, it plunged in the air,
While the hearts of the crowd were lifted in pray'r.

It touched the calm waters with splashing refrain;
It lifted a moment, and came down again ;

The foam, in its wake, white-crestedly lay,
And thick, like a mist, rose a mantle of spray.

The buoy, on the river, was caught on the run ;
The engines ceased beating as onwards it spun ;

And far, in the distance, it soon came to rest,
As the golden sun sank in the redolent west.

And hushed was the air with a silence supreme,
Then a crash of applause: of welcome the cream.

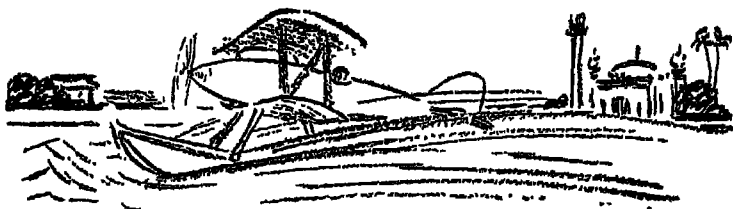
To the joy of the day it had added its leav'n:
Next day, it was lost in the blue vault of heav'n.

Hats off to the man who pilots the plane,
Through storm-cloud and gale, through sunlight and rain;

For the Angel of Death is hot in pursuit,
To the laurels of men his right to dispute.

He knows not the hour, he cares not the day,
When his hand will stretch forth and bear him away.

Hats off to the brave who plough through the air
And pay, with their lives, the terrible fare.



MY BIRD FROM PARADISE

NO, there is no misprint in the caption. It is not the well-known Bird of Paradise about which I am going to write, but just a little bird which came to me from Paradise, was mine for two days and was gone.

I would have hesitated to relate the story but that my friend Mr. Ajodhya Prasad, a lawyer from Allahabad, who was an eye-witness to this amazing incident, has already blazoned forth the facts in "The Leader" a few years ago. The result of that publication was that I received letters from kindly Hindu gentlemen all over India suggesting that that little bird was a re-incarnation of some loved one of mine who was dead and who had been reborn into the winged fraternity. Each letter ended with the request that I should give up shooting. I have not yet been able to subscribe to the theory of Re-incarnation; but the appeal of the little creature round whom the story revolves was so intense that I have given up bird-shooting entirely and limit myself to big game only.

It was in 1927, I think, when the incident happened. I was camping not very far from *Tahsil* Headquarters at Handia in the Allahabad district. At dawn, one glorious morning, I went out to a *jheel* a mile away. What a thrill! High up in the sky, in significant arrow formation, there floated a flight of geese. "Honk Honk!" came the voices of these travellers from the North and then the crooning and quacking of waterfowl and teal in the reeds of the *jheel* filled the morning air.

I was accompanied by my orderlies and a coolie. Two or three sons of the soil, going early to their fields, espied us and followed behind.

Our approach to the *jheel* resulted in an intensified chorus of confused song and then a flapping of wings and whole flights rose from the reeds, sweeping up gracefully into the air.

And now a flight, circuted the *jheel* looking down on us suspiciously. We dropped to the ground and soon the flight was directly over head. They seemed to be hopelessly out of range, but my impatience overpowered me.

"Bang! Bang!" I pulled off both triggers in rapid succession. Then the miracle happened.

The flight soared up higher and higher; but one young waterfowl left them and shot like an arrow from a bow straight down towards mother-earth. When just a few yards from the ground it stretched its wings as if to check its downwards fall and came gracefully to rest in the field fifty yards from me.

A sanguinary joy seized me and I was on the point of firing another shot at what I thought was the wounded victim of my gun, but something stopped me. What that inner check was I am not sure; I did not fire.

My orderly, who, for some reason or other, I nicknamed "Pontius Pilate", true to his Muslim instincts, rushed forward, penknife in hand, to slaughter the wounded creature with a holy *Bismillah* to make the game acceptable as food for the true follower of the Faith; but I checked him.

Leaving my five companions where they stood, I proceeded towards the little bird which sat fearlessly and almost inquisitively watching as I walked up to it.

I expected it to flutter and at least attempt to fly away on my approach. But no, it waited patiently, heroically I thought, and allowed me to pick it up. I examined it thoroughly but not a sign of wound or blood could I find.

"Poor little thing", I thought, "I cannot murder it in cold blood. I shall give it its freedom." Instantly, I threw it up in the air and then the second miracle happened.

In full possession of the powers of its delicate wings it flew about fifty feet up, took a small circle in the air and came down again, almost on my feet.

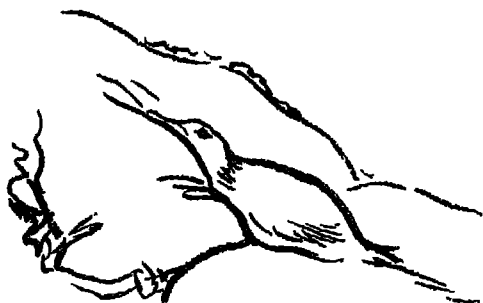
For a moment, I was too mystified to act, too taken aback to think of reasons why this little creature returned to me. There was only one thing to do and that was to accept its proffered friendship.

I picked it up and put it on my shoulder from where it did not move. A little later it was nibbling the lobe of my ear.

I decided that my shikar for the day was over and I must go back to my camp with my new found friend and think over all the mystery and the wonder of this happening.

My companions followed a little distance behind me and on reaching camp I was met by various lawyers and litigants who had arrived for their cases that day. They were naturally very interested in the story I gave which was fully and excitedly corroborated by my companions.

On reaching the Inspection Bungalow I shut the doors of my bed room, and put my little friend inside, free to move about the whole room if he (or perhaps I should say 'she') so desired.



After a rapid breakfast, I proceeded to the tent where I was to hold court. The news of my mysterious caller had spread like wild-fire. More lawyers, more litigants, and more spectators had arrived and the buzz of excited controversy was hushed only when I entered.

Immediately I took my chair, a newly-arrived lawyer addressed me in grave and mystified tones, telling me that he had heard the extraordinary story of this extraordinary bird and begging me to show all who had gathered there the little creature before the day's work started.

I readily consented and went back to the Inspection Bungalow to fetch the bird.

I was a little surprised when I failed to find it in the corner where I had placed it. I looked behind my boxes and beneath my bed expecting to find it hiding somewhere but I failed to espy it.

Suddenly my eyes fell on the bed and there, to my amazement, was my little friend comfortably leaning up against my pillow. It was like a page out of Grimm's Fairy Tales; but it was true. For all the world it was a human-being having a little rest after a strenuous morning.

I offered it my finger and with a non chalant air, it hopped on to it and kept gazing at me almost incisively till those lovely clear brown eyes seemed to peer into the inmost recesses of my soul. Now it would bend its head enquiringly to one side and then to the other; but its gaze was always fixed on me. It was positively uncanny; but there it was; and even to this day, after ten long years I can still see those beautiful, earnest eyes looking steadily into mine, enquiringly, piercingly, trustfully. I took the little creature to the tent. An expectant hush prevailed. And then, all at once, almost every voice was lifted in exclamations of surprise.

This was evidently too much for the little thing's nerves and it flew out of the tent and was gone.

I watched it soaring in the air till it was a speck in the sky, above us and we returned to our daily task and proceeded with the items on the Cause List. A few minutes later, while learned counsel were monotonously haranguing the court on a fine point of law, I felt a gentle "tap! tap! tap!" on my shoe. Before I could look under the table, the tapping was repeated.

There was no mistake about it. There was the little bird sitting between my feet, tapping at my shoe either out of sheer playfulness or from a definite desire to draw my attention.

And there it stayed, feeling evidently safe at the feet of the most unworthily god it could have chosen on earth.

Quite obviously, the only place from which it could have made its entry into the tent was from the hiatus at the back of the tent where the flaps of the canvas had not met.

For one day longer, I had the companionship of this little bird from Paradise and almost every moment of it was spent in

trying to find some reasonable explanation for its curious advent and behaviour. But I never solved the mystery and probably will never solve it. I leave that to others and merely state the facts.

That night, it slept with me in my bed next to my pillows. In the morning it pecked crumbs out of my hands. All was bustle. I was moving camp; I had to make an inspection half-a mile off before I went. I left my friend, as before, in the bed-room and closed the doors.

When I returned, my little friend was no longer there. The door was ajar. He had gone for ever. The explanation of the *chaukidar* was that a gust of wind had blown the door open, the bird had come out and the he had seen it fly in the direction in which I had gone. My bearer looked sceptically at him but said nothing.

I did not realise at the moment the reason for the look which I had observed on my bearer's face and taking the *chaukidar's* statements at their face value, I accepted it with a feeling of remorse and regret that I had seldom experienced before.

"Would he never come back? No, it was impossible." In a few minutes I would be, motoring to Allahabad, thirty miles away, and he could not trace me there. "For me to trace him was outside the range of possibility." I decided to wait half-an-hour for his return, and I noticed that my bearer did not seem to appreciate my desire to wait but hurried me on, much to my annoyance. "The brute," I thought, "He cannot rise to these heights of sentimental attachment between the human and the creature." My patience was not rewarded, though I waited an hour and more. Disconsolate and with all hopes shattered, I decided to leave.

The summer sun had now risen in the heavens and I motored away from the Inspection Bungalow at an almost reckless speed to reach Allahabad before it became unbearably hot both for me and my car.

I had gone a mile when my bearer spoke. His voice came hesitatingly as he said, "*Huzoor*, I do not wish to make any complaint but because I have seen you befooled by that *badmash chaukidar*, I think it my duty to speak. He saw you waiting for an hour, and hoping for the return of that bird, and he knew all the time that he had slaughtered it and it was actually being cooked in his house as you waited."

The shock was tremendous and my first impulse was to stop the car and go back. I jammed on the break with all my strength and the car came to a stop with a jerk. I was in a towering rage and nothing would have stopped me from making a violent assault had the *chaukidar* been within approachable distance of me.

"Can this horrible thing be true?" I thought. "Can it be that my bearer is lying and if so, why should he lie?" Can it be that he had a quarrel with the *chaukidar* before he left?" "If so, why did he not tell me this at the Inspection Bungalow?"

"What proof have you?", I demanded of the bearer. And before he could reply, I added, "I shall go back and confront you with the *chaukidar* and if you cannot prove the charge you have made against him, I shall make you swallow your words and you shall receive the same punishment for your false charge as he would have, had he enacted this terrible deed"

"*Huzoor*", said my bearer tremblingly, "I wanted to spare you the horrible sight; but the feathers of that bird are

now strewn outside the door of the *chaukidar's* house and the body of the bird is simmering in his cooking vessel inside."

I rushed back, my whole being trembling with uncontrollable and I believe, righteous anger. Within a minute or two, I was at the *chaukidar's* house. The *chaukidar* was absent.

My bearer had spoken the truth. There, shimmering in the full blaze of the noon-day sun were strewn the feathers of my little friend. The tears welled up in my eyes. I was too sickened by the sight to examine the cooking vessel inside.

I left my bearer where he stood and went aside under the cool shade of a tamarind tree and tried to calm myself.

I now believe that St. Francis was a friend of the birds and that they did come and commune with him. Had I too been a saint, that little bird may have revealed all the mystery of its advent into my life; but I am not and so I must wait for some Delphic Oracle to reveal the secret to me some day.

I realise the penalty of recounting this story is to be stamped a romancer—but I am prepared to pay that price because of the unalloyed truth of the facts, depending only on the corroboration of those who were eyewitnesses to the actual occurrence.

FOREST MELODIES

(1)

THERE'S a squeak and a grunt in the nallah below
And a clink of hard hoofs on the flint,
A herd of wild pigs go snuffing past
As the Winter-line loses its tint.
The terrors of Night hold the forest in grip
The shepherd has gone with his lute,
But the owl sings his song with somnolent moan,
"To-hoot ! To-hoot To-hoot !"

(2)

Is it the bitter sound of grief
Which the Night-Jar's heart has wrung ?
Is it a soul bereft of its mate
Which the midnight hour has stung ?
Or is it a dirge to the lonely trees
On which it was wont to woo,
As it rings through the night insistently,
"Chuckoo ! Chuckoo ! Chuckoo !"

(3)

Is it the sound of a humming bee
That sonorously fills the air ?
Or is it a pipe on a single note ?
'Tis the monotone of the Bear.
And now through the forest he hurtles his way
From his cave with its bouldered roof ;
With grunting and stifled breath he comes,
"Ah-whoof ! Ah-whoof ! Ah-whoof !"

(4)

A chorus of wailing comes drifting along,
 A sad and a mournful refrain,
 As the jackals, in packs, go slinking away
 With their little ones in the wain.
 With caution and stealth they slip through the bush
 And sniff for the scent in the air ;
 In their search for carrion they eagerly cry,
 " O ! where ? O ! where ? O ! where ? "

(5)

There's a noise of unrest in the branches above :
 The Langoors and monkeys astir.
 Their leader booms out a call of 'Beware !'
 In the thicket below, there's a purr.
 Two eyes like blue sapphires look up from below,
 Reflecting the light of a star,
 And the panther, the night-air has rent with his cry,
 " Ah-ha ! Ah-ha ! Ah-ha ! "

(6)

Is it thunder that now in the distance peals,
 And echoes from hill to hill ?
 What noise has invaded this haven of rest
 Where a moment ago it was still ?
 A Tiger : the mantle of silence
 Is torn with bellow and boom,
 And valley and plain is filled with the sound,
 " Ah-whom ! Ah-whom ! Ah-whom ! "

(7)

Is it a gale that is sweeping along ?

The bedlam is now at its peak :

A herd of great elephants tramp through the trees,

With trumpeting noise and shriek.

The crashing of trees comes now from afar,

Then, silence unbroken holds sway,

Till the chirrup of birds in the grey of the dawn,

Bids adieu to the Night and its Day.

STRANGE TALES FROM GARHWAL

Many interesting stories revolve round the name of Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah, an illustrious predecessor of the present Ruler of the State.

It is related that on one occasion when Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah went to Hardwar during the annual bathing season, he arrived late, with the result that all the best camping sites near the bathing ghat had already been occupied by various Rajas and Maharajas and their followers.

Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah was thus, compelled to pitch his camp at a place nearly two miles away from the bathing ghat. His followers were greatly distressed and ashamed that so great a prince had to suffer the ignominy of having to content himself with an encampment so far away from the important place of holy ablution. They trembled to think that their revered Maharaja would have to suffer the shame next morning of walking this dolorous two miles.

That evening, his Prime Minister came to him and suggested that he should insist, even at that late hour, on getting one of the nearer encampments.

Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah made no reply, but dressing himself in the garb of an ascetic, proceeded to a secluded place about a hundred yards away from his camp, where he prepared to commence his prayers immediately and to continue them through the night.

His Prime Minister followed him silently and before he taking his leave, once again repeated the request. In gentle but confident tones the Maharaja replied "Have no fear. I pray here to night and if the Ganges is my true mother, she will come to me herself before morning." The Prime Minister thought that religious fervour had made his beloved Ruler speak irresponsibly. But realising the futility of argument with a *Maharaja whose reputation for firmness was as great as his reputation for piety*, the Prime Minister held his tongue and departed.

Soon the camp fires were extinguished and the tired pilgrims were all asleep save for the pious Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah who sat through the silent watches of the night lost in adoration and prayer.

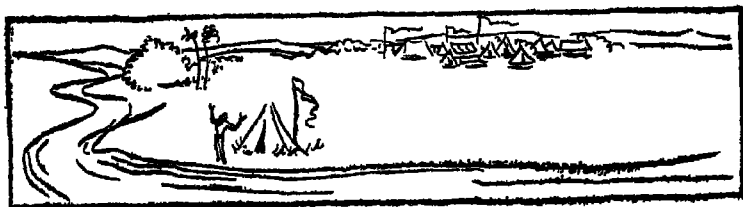
When morning broke, the waters of Mother Ganges were lapping the ground almost at the feet, of Maharaja where he had spent his long vigil. The whole course of the Ganges had undergone a change and the bend of the river at the spot is visible today.

Those Rulers whose camps had been right up against the river's edge were no less surprised that morning at finding how far away from it they were. They soon came to learn of the Maharaja of Tehri's prophecy of the night before and they went to call on the great man to pay their respect to his piety and supernatural powers. When Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah was informed of their arrival, he ordered that his sandals be placed in the middle of the *reception tent* and that his visitors should be ushered in and asked to excuse his personal presence as he was too busy thanking Parmeshwar for the favour that had been conferred on him.

When the Maharaja was not praying, he was playing Chess, his favourite game. The legend is that one day he was challenged

by an ape who was a past-master at that game. The Maharaja was losing hopelessly, when his Prime Minister, with a view to helping him and distracting the ape, placed an earthen vessel full of nuts by the side of the Chess board. The ape was immediately attracted and while greedily satisfying his appetite, forgot his plan of campaign and lost the game. This saved the Maharaja from the loss of a fortune.

On another occasion, the Grand Moghul at Delhi sent a demand to Maharaja Sheo Darshan Shah that he should forthwith send him a *nazarana* of "*ek lakh rupiya*" (one lakh of rupees) and an accurate map of his territories. The Maharaja sought the advice of his Prime Minister, who was a clever Kumaoni. The Prime Minister told him that the best way to avoid paying so large an amount as one hundred thousand rupees and the preparation of an elaborate map, was to dissemble an inane simplicity. Now, the words "*ek lakh rupiya*" can be literally translated as 'a rupee made of sealing wax.' So the Maharaja encased a rupee in sealing wax and sent it to the grand Moghul in compliance with his order for "*ek lakh rupiya*" and along with it he sent the Indian vegetable called the '*karela*' which he said was sent in lieu of a map of his country as on account of its undulating surface, it would more accurately represent the hilly nature of his country than a map on paper would. The Grand Moghul instead of being annoyed, was greatly touched by the naive simplicity of so great a Maharaja and accepted the presentations. Tales and legends of this nature exist in great profusion in the Garhwal Hills, but those given already are fairly characteristic.



THE HOG-HUNTER'S SONG

THE beaters are yelling,
We're moving in line,
A boar breaks away
Fast, furious, and fine.

Then "Ride" comes the signal:
We leap to the front,
O! the thrill of the moment,
The joy of the hunt.

We ride neck and neck,
We spur on our steeds,
We follow the boar
Wherever he leads.

To hell with the nallah,
To hell with the hole:
There's only one passion,
There's only one goal:

To spear the swift object
That's rushing ahead,
Through grass and through bushes,
Through marshes we're led.

He turns, of a sudden,
With ominous grunt,
Like a streak of swift lighting
Bearing down on our front.

Erect stand his bristles,
His tushes agleam,
His eyes are ablaze
With fury 'twould seem.

Our lances grasped firmly,
We gallop apace,
Sitting down in our saddles
His onslaught to face.

A crash! And the moment
Supreme has arrived,
'Neath the loins of a charger
The wild-boar has dived.

On the ground falls the rider,
The horse and the boar,
The spear in two pieces,
All covered with gore.

But the hunt has not ended,
The hog darts away:
A beast—but too noble
To gloat o'er his prey.

The chase recommences:
A thudding of hoofs,
A snorting of horses,
The pig's angry whoofs.

With the swoop of an eagle
A rider bears down
On the pig: just a vision
Of khaki and brown.

The spear-head has riven
His quivering side,
The brave jungle fighter
In glory has died.

You say it is cruel
But don't be misled,
The boar will face tiger
And fight till he's dead.

Then here's to the rider,
And here's to his steed,
And here's to the wild-boar,
The bravest indeed.

We'll spurn the faint-hearted,
The critics and all,
And ever respond
To the hog-hunter's call.

THE CAMEL

SHIP of the desert, whither away ;
Patiently wending your wearisome way
Silently, stealthily onwards you go
Past village and town, steady and slow.

Ship of the desert sailing on land,
Faintly imprinting the glistening sand ;
Swishingly, hissingly patter your feet
On the mud of the path or the stones of the street.

Ship of the desert of ancient renown,
Selected to carry to Bethlehem town
Presents of myrrh, frankincense, and gold
To the Child in the Manger which sages behold.

Ship of the desert ! Sign of the East !
Austere in your movement, though only a beast
At your helm is your captain—a Bedouin Sheik
Your anchor a rope from your nose to a stake.

Ship of the desert without a mast,
When you reach your journey's end at last,
You'll rest awhile' neath starry skies
And gurglingly sing your lullabies.

Ship of the desert, resting awhile,
You've journeyed far, for many a mile,
And you'll journey on for ever and aye
Till morning breaks on a fairer day.

PHANTOMS OF THE NIGHT

(This story is based on fact and has considerable currency in an important Cantonment Station in India.)

“HALT, who goes there.” The stentorian voice of a sentry rang out into the silence of the night.

In the pale light of the moon stood the figure of a Major mounted on a white charger. Yes, it was Major X and it was certainly his charger. The sentry who was an old soldier, recognised them both, and yet, Major X had been reported ‘missing’ ten years before during the Great War.

“Halt, who goes there,” again shouted the sentry.

In measured tones the apparition replied, “Visiting Rounds.”

“Stand, Visiting Rounds. Guard turn out,” bellowed the sentry. Rapidly the Guard lined up in position.

The Major turned his charger round and noiselessly disappeared.

The stupefied Guard stood to attention, almost transfixed, for a full five minutes when their commander, filled with wonderment, dismissed it.

The gong tolled the midnight hour and the relieving sentry stood to his post. Hardly had he done so when the Major reappeared. The Guard was turned out again. Trembling they stood. The Major advanced towards them. There was no mistake about it. It was Major X again. Could it be that he

had returned to the Regiment again after all these years? This time, he drew closer. They recognised his features. He was looking haggard and a strange far-away look was in his eyes. His horse seemed to move down the line with padded hooves.

The Major spoke no word and after finishing his silent inspection, softly slipped away till he and his horse looked like a drift of mist on the hill-side and then vanished.

The mystified commander of the Guard again dismissed his men after a long pause.

Next morning, the incident was the talk of the Battalion. No wonder that the spirit of the Major still haunted his old regiment which he loved so well and served so devotedly. He was an elderly bachelor and lived for his work. He avoided society and especially that of the ladies.

But strange to relate, on the night his wraith turned out the Guard, Captain G. living in the house formerly occupied by Major X, saw the vision of a woman—a smartly-dressed society lady.

“Tap-tap-tap” came the patter of slender heels on the cement of the verandah floor. Captain G put down his newspaper and peered through the panes of glass in the low window bordering the verandah. He saw her pass. Her head was turned towards the window as she seemed to be gazing into the room. Yet, there was an almost vacant look in her eyes.

Captain G was on the point of going out to enquire who it was when, to his amazement, the apparition passed through the closed door into the hall and down it, the steady patter of heels accompanying the spectre and receding with it to the bed-room till it could be heard no more. And now a palpitating silence

held sway—one of those expectant silences which throb with mystery. The pattering of heels had ceased.

Captain G sat petrified. For a moment he could not make up his mind whether he should follow the vision should he be able to summon up sufficient courage to do so or whether he should rush out of the house in howling terror.

He rose from his chair, still undecided: his brow puckered, his hand shading his eyes. But it was only for a moment.

"Tap-tap-tap", it came again with ominous precision. Down the hall came the steady dull beat, more perceptible with every passing second. As she went by the drawing-room door, Captain G shrank back a pace. He saw her pass, her face pallid as death; and then, without a moment's hesitation, through the closed entrance door she went.

Captain G ran to the window and crouching by it, watched her move steadily into the bright moonlight outside and then into the half-lit shade of the great oak-tree in the front garden.

She stood there, still and statue-like, tall and slim and graceful. She was gazing towards the long narrow drive which led to the bungalow. A few breathless moments passed. Then, up the drive, now in shadow, now in the mellow light of the moon, came a pure-white charger, with flowing mane and ridden by an officer evidently in full uniform. The officer dismounted a few paces away from the woman and slinging the charger's reins over his arm, proceeded towards the figure.

No word of greeting passed their lips, no sign of surprise or sorrow or joy escaped them. The officer now held out his arms invitingly towards her. She seemed to sway slightly in his direction as if to yield herself to his embrace.

Then quick action followed. The atmosphere suddenly seemed surcharged with rapid movement. Something suddenly rushed between the two figures. It seemed to come from nowhere. The next moment Captain G discerned what it was.

It was a man. He was in Civilian attire. With a quick swooping movement, he had lifted the woman up in his arms and facing the officer, moved slowly back, step by step. As he backed, he and the woman he carried slowly seemed to melt in the night-air: now they looked like a column of smoke which lifted from the surface of the earth and then they vanished.

The officer stood as if transfixed, his arms still held out as before: but only for a moment longer and then they fell by his sides. He turned on his heel and buried his head in his charger's flowing mane. His whole frame seemed to be shaking.

The moments passed and a deep-throated owl hooted hoarsely and somnolently.

The officer slowly raised his head, collected his reins and mounted. Silently then, with straight back and head erect, as if steeled with resolution, he rode out of the drive towards the Guard-room.

Captain G watched him go-and as he stood gazing at the now deserted drive, he heard the repeated echo of the sentry's challenge coming from the distance, "Halt, who goes there."

MORE INDIAN VERSE

Jungle Jingles

There's a telling of the sambar and a hooting of the owl,
There's a croaking of the cricket and a clucking of the fowl,
There's a talking of the kakar and the night-hawk's piercing scream
There's a rustling in the branches and a rushing of the stream.

Here the noises of the forest as I sit upon a tree
In the shadows of the evening with a rifle on my knee.
Kakar! below me there's a carcass in a slumber of the dead
While I'm waiting, ever waiting, to hear the tiger's tread.

Of a sudden there's a stillness; hushed is every bird and beast,
For he's coming, all majestic! Who disturbs him in his feast!
Even the panther, in the distance, is silenced as with fear,
For the king of every forest is hungry- and is here.

With an angry sound of snuffling and defiance in his eye
He springs upon the carcass; dare approach him and you'll die!
Swift my weapon's at my shoulder; there's a thundering uproar:
"He's wounded! He is maddened! He's dying! He's no more!"

“ Meri Patang ”

(My Kite)

(Kite-flying in India, especially during the winter months, is a favourite pastime. An attempt has been made here to bring out the true spirit which pervades Indian kite-flyers by versifying in Hindustani. That this Hindustani is put to English metre, makes the poem a literary novelty, or perhaps more correctly, an unliterary excrescence. But the average resident in India should find little difficulty in following the meaning of the words. To simplify matters I mention the meaning of some of the more uncommon words below :—

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>shan</i> | — pride |
| <i>khilta</i> | — shows up |
| <i>duba</i> | — dipped |
| <i>war</i> | — attacks |
| <i>jhapat</i> | — pounce |
| <i>tang</i> | — worries |
| <i>manjhe</i> | — cord roughened with pounded glass and paste |
| <i>ari</i> | — saw |
| <i>gurur</i> | — pride |
| <i>gaur</i> | — thought |
| <i>fakhla</i> | — dove |
| <i>be-raham</i> | — merciless |
| <i>baz</i> | — falcon |
| <i>asar</i> | — effect |
| <i>dhang</i> | — method |
| <i>fateh</i> | — victory. |

Kia shan se woh urti hai, meri patang !
Asman me kia khilta hai, surkh uska rang;
Ab duba, ab hawa me gia woh sawar.
Ab dusre patang par kia ek war.

Kuch der tak woh ure sath sath wa sang sang,
Jhapat jhapat kar yiun kia tang :
Manjhe par manjha, ab ari ki tarah,
Ek dusre par chala : gurur me bhara.

Jaise fakhta ko marta hai be-raham baz
Woh mara. " Woh kata " ab ayi awaz.
Yih manjhe ka asar; urane ka dhang ;
Yih fateh ka maza : " Wah, meri patang ! "

Queen India

INDIA, like some high-brow'd queen, rides on
In majesty, her crown bedeck'd
With jewels of Golconda fame,
Her snow-white robes of khaddar round her drawn:

Her chariot yoked to fiery steeds of Change.
She comes ! midst the choking dust
Of struggle and of great resolve;
With magnificent assault and strange.

She comes ! The reins of great endeavour girt
Around her waist, and in her hand
A flashing falchion ground upon
The flint of Non-co-operation's sturt.

See ! The summit's nearly full-attained
While Opposition's forces go
Scatt'ring 'fore her flaming sword
Of Truth and Right and Freedom preordained.

Ahead, before her fixed eye, we see,
Formidable, the looming heights
Of dread Communal claims and strife:
Ride on ! Brave Queen ! God grant thee victory !

" The A. F. I."

THE A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
They're civilians and they're soldiers,
They're boys with burly shoulders,
They're the madness of the girls,
These bonny chaps with curls,
The jolly old A.F.I. !

The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
Some things may end in smoke;
But it's different with these folk :
They start with fine parades
And they end with lemonades,
The jolly old A.F.I. !

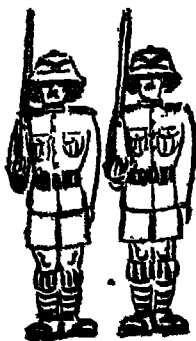
The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
See them marching on their way
With united step and sway,
They need no gramophone,
They've a brass band of their own,
The jolly old A.F.I.

The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
To the State they're no expense
Yet they're " India's last defence,"
They're loyal to the bone
As tradition's amply shown,
The jolly old A.F.I.

The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
Their fathers stood like rock
By Sir Henry Havelock :
By Lawrence in his hell
Of storm and shock and shell,
The jolly old A.F.I. !

The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
Some day they'll stand again
On the battle-burdened plain
To uphold the British Crown :
Its honour and renown,
The jolly old A.F.I.

The A.F.I., the A.F.I., the jolly old A.F.I. !
When disturbances arise
Of formidable size,
They help the Armed Police
To restore the local peace,
The jolly old A.F.I.



A JUNGLE LONELINESS

DAWN ! And the far-flung Eastern sky
Is splashed with deep rose-tinted hue—
A blushing face comes drawing night
Dear One, 'tis yours ! 'Tis you !

Day ! And the dazzling noontide sun
Bends down to sip the morning dew,
A countenance that beams with fun
Looks down. 'Tis yours ! 'Tis you !

Dusk ! and the twilight's soft embrace
Shuts out the grey old hills from view
Two arms are round me, and a face
Draws near. "Tis yours ! 'Tis you !

Night ! And the stars are all ablaze,
Piercing the vault of darkened blue—
Two eyes gleam out with searching gaze
At me. They're yours ! 'Tis you !

Sun, Moon, and Stars, the days, the nights,
Go fleeting by as 'twere in Grand Review
While I sit lonely with my fancy flights,
Waiting—yearning—longing—just for you !

Imagination's Heaven

LAST night the hills were draped in grey,
My thoughts went back to "yesterday,"
To far Kunjkharak's hallowed glens,
Its shadowed forests, furze, and fens.

A thousand seraphs dazzling stood,
Where "yesterday" had been a wood,
In robes of scarlet, crimson, gold,
My soul in rapture to enfold.

A sweet soft music filled the air,
A sweetness which I scarce could bear,
And Heaven came down to kiss the Earth,
To give dead joy a second birth.

And then a sweeter melody
Came floating in the air to me ;
It was my own Beloved's voice
Which made my anxious heart rejoice.

It whispered softly in my ear,
Drew, from my eye, a glist'ning tear ;
Then God Himself looked down to bless
That wondrous kiss, that sweet caress,

For He Himself the Author is
Of Love—and we are His.

**“ Watchman ! What
Of The Night ? ”**

THE sun of a happy India set
In the golden west of the summer sky ;
We had hardly the time to wish it adieu
Or to whisper a last good-bye.

And the moon shot up in the azure vault-
What is that we see in the paling light ?
The doors of the prisons are thrown ajar ;
In front—a host in spotless white.

I turn to the man who stands at the gate
And ask him, “ Watchman, what of the night ? ”
“ God only knows,” he makes reply,
“ Pray for the dawn ! Pray for light ! ”

THE BURSTING OF THE MONSOONS.

The sky was grey and leaden : the Moon was dull and pale ;
Suspended high, the dust-clouds, in canopying veil,
O'erlooked wide fields and hamlets of India's arid plains—
Sun-baked and scorch'd and yellow—a thirsting, for the Rains.
The atmosphere was stifling : the air was still as death,
As the parched *jheels* emitted their foul and charnel breath.
Storm-clouded the horizon : a flash across the sky,
A boom of far-off thunder, and a breeze like a distant sigh :
'Tis the dirge of a dying summer : the music of the gods ;
Dead leaves rise up and caper : the Melantolia nods :
Tall trees to life awaken : the top-most branches sway
And the long grass is waving along the zephyr way.
A mantle of red shadow envelopes all around—
The trees, the grass, the hamlets, as the storm-clouds forward bound.
Of a sudden, comes a whirlwind, dancing, spinning rapidly ;
Then gust on gust bursts quick, incessant, mad, rushing furiously.
A crash—and the Monsoon's on us, in torrents everywhere,
With the bellowing roar of thunder, and lightning, flare on flare.

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The tempest's now abated : a hush falls o'er the scene ;
Then myriads of birds start chatt'ring and the grass again is green,
The fields like vast, still mirrors, in sheets of water lie,
The frogs, in droning chorus, sing hoarse their lullaby,
Each tank and pool is flooded : great rivers burst their banks :
King Summer's reign is ended : the Monsoon sovereign ranks.